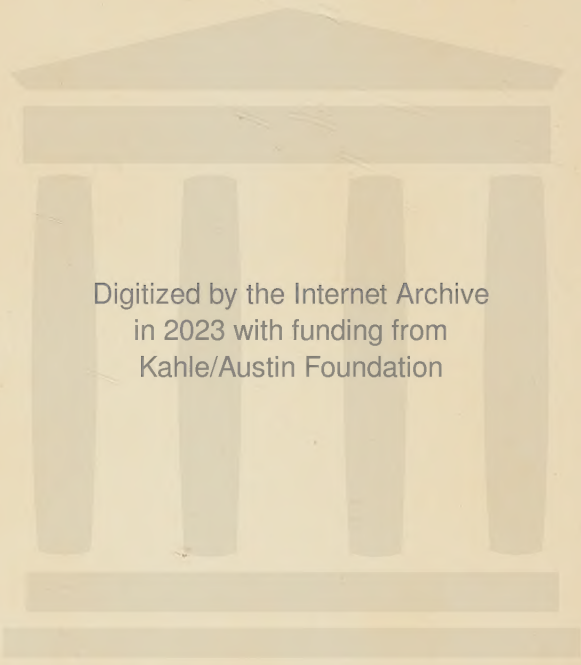


The
GOLDEN BOYS
RESCUED BY RADIO

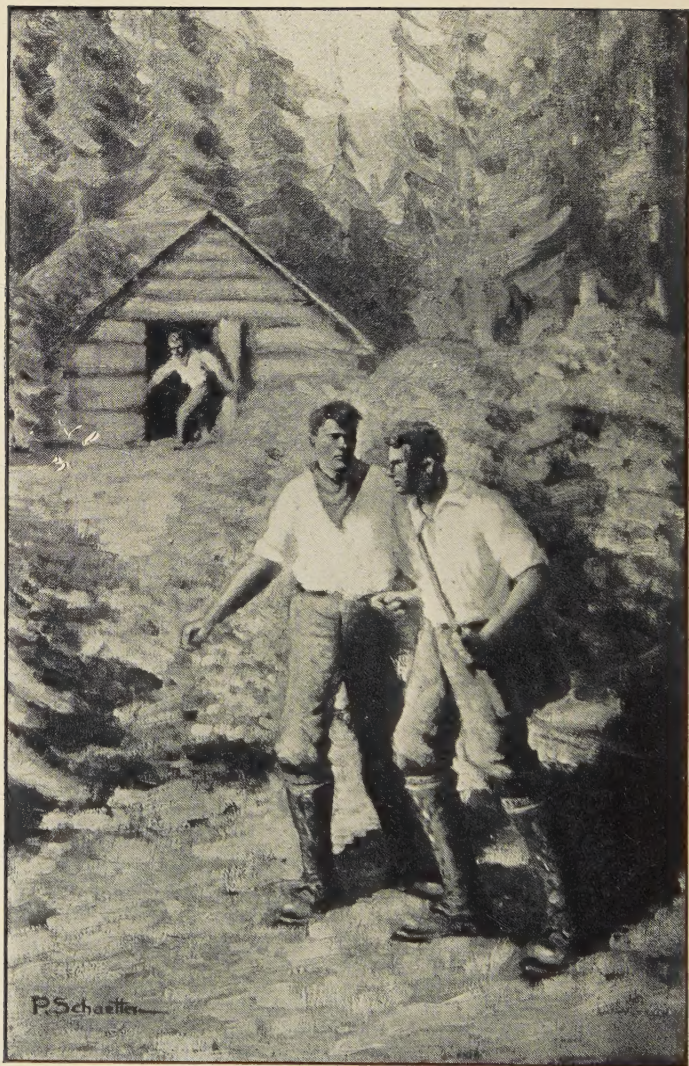


L. P. WYMAN





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"That cabin is exactly like the one I saw up at Moosehead," he whispered, as soon as he was beside Bob.

Page 65

(*The Golden Boys Rescued by Radio.*)

THE GOLDEN BOYS RESCUED BY RADIO

BY L. P. WYMAN, PH.D.

Dean of Pennsylvania Military College

AUTHOR OF

"The Golden Boys and Their New Electric Cell," "The Golden Boys at the Fortress," "The Golden Boys in the Maine Woods," "The Golden Boys with the Lumber Jacks," "The Golden Boys on the River Drive," "The Golden Boys Along the River Allagash."



A. L. BURT COMPANY

Publishers

New York

THE GOLDEN BOYS SERIES

A Series of Stories for Boys 12 to 16 Years of Age

By L. P. WYMAN, PH.D.

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The Golden Boys and Their New Electric Cell
The Golden Boys at the Fortress
The Golden Boys in the Maine Woods
The Golden Boys with the Lumber Jacks
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THE GOLDEN BOYS RESCUED BY RADIO

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THE GOLDEN BOYS RESCUED BY RADIO

CHAPTER I.

THE POCKET RADIO.

"THERE, that's done. Got that condenser ready, Jack?"

"I'll have it in a jiffy, Bob. The wire's come unsoldered and I've got to fix it but it won't take but a minute."

"All right, but make it snappy. I'm on pins to know whether the thing's going to work."

The two boys, Bob and Jack Golden, aged nineteen and eighteen respectively, had been hard at work for nearly three weeks in their laboratory, in the basement of their home in Skowhegan, Maine, a small town some hundred miles north of Portland, on the Kennebec River. It was now nearly ten o'clock at night and they had been hard at work since early morning in an endeavor to bring their labors to an end before going to bed.

"There, she's fixed," Jack declared, with a sigh of relief as he placed a small soldering iron in its place over the work bench.

"Good. Now you take your set up to the bedroom and we'll give it a try out. If it only works, it'll be the best thing we've ever done, Jack boy," and Bob threw his arms about his brother's neck and gave him a hearty hug.

"Save the pieces," Jack laughed as he turned to the bench and picked up a small wooden case which he slipped into his coat pocket. Then from a small drawer he took a brass cylinder about seven inches long and slightly over an inch thick. Caps, which had the appearance of silver, but were composed of an alloy, the secret of which was known only to the two boys, closed the ends of the cylinder. Some three feet of fine wire was soldered to the center of each cap. From the same drawer he took a small round object closely resembling the ear piece of a head telephone.

"I'll call you in about ten minutes," he said as he started toward the door. "That is, I'll try to," he added turning with his hand on the knob.

As soon as his brother had closed the door Bob set to work assembling his outfit similar, in all respects to that which Jack had taken with him. The small wooden case he put in an outside coat pocket pushing the two wires which led from it through

the lining of the coat. These he quickly attached to the brass cylinder which he then slipped into his inside pocket. The little telephone receiver, which was designed to serve as a transmitter as well, he connected by two wires to the two terminals at one end of the case and slipped it into the same pocket. As he stood there there was nothing visible about him to indicate that he carried on his person their latest invention.

"There, I guess there's nothing more to do except wait," he said aloud as he sat down in a chair.

While he is waiting will be as good a time as any other to introduce the two boys to any who have not read the previous volumes of this series.

Bob and Jack Golden were sons of a well-to-do manufacturer and lumberman, Mr. Richard Golden. Their home was in the little town of Skowhegan on the Kennebec River. The boys, being of an inventive turn, their father had fitted up for them, in the basement of the home, a combined workshop and laboratory. Here they spent many hours of their vacations and more than one useful invention had resulted from their labors. The most important was undoubtedly an entirely new type of storage cell. This cell though small enough to be carried in the pocket, was yet powerful enough to run a motor boat or an automobile for a long time.

"It's about time I was getting that call," Bob

thought as he glanced at his watch for the tenth time since Jack had left. "It's been more than ten minutes. Guess I'd better go up and see what's up."

But just as he started to rise from his chair a faint but distinct buzzing sound caught his ear.

"There he is now," he thought as he quickly pulled the receiver from his pocket and held it to his ear.

"Hello, Bob. Can you hear me?" The words were as distinctly audible as if his brother had been standing at his side.

"Fine," he replied holding the small receiver, which, by pressing a button on the side of the case, he had converted into a transmitter, a few inches from his mouth. "It seems to work all right at this end. Can you hear me?"

Pressing the button again he held the receiver to his ear once more.

"Plain as day," came the delighted voice of his brother. "I'll be down in two shakes of a dog's tail."

Bob had hardly disconnected the wires and taken the case and cylinder from his pockets when Jack burst into the room.

"Whoop la, she's a go all right," the younger boy shouted as he caught hold of his brother and for a moment the two delighted boys executed an Indian war dance about the room.

"We'd better not make too much noise," Bob

cautioned as out of breath he threw himself into a chair. "I expect the folks are in bed by this time and they may think the house is on fire," he laughed.

"But to think that we've hit it at last after trying more than twenty different things," Jack declared as he too sat down. "It seems too good to be a fact, but those selenium plates are evidently just the thing. They catch the waves just as well and perhaps better than aërials."

"They seem to is right," agreed more cautious Bob. "But remember we've tried them for only a comparatively few feet. How they will work at a long distance is another question."

"Of course that's so," agreed Jack thoughtfully, "but, for the life of me, I can't see why they won't catch them just as well at a long distance as at a short. Anyhow we'll know before long. I'll take my bike and go up to the lake first thing in the morning and we'll give them another try."

"That's the ticket, and now I move we hit the hay for a few hours' sleep, I'm about played out working all day and most of the night the way we've been doing lately," Bob said as he switched off the light.

The two boys had indeed as Jack put it, "been burning the candle at both ends," and they no more than touched their pillows before they were sound asleep. Nor did they awake until their sister, Edna, called them.

"Come on there, you sleepy heads. Think I'm going to keep breakfast waiting for you all day?" she cried as she sprinkled a few drops of water on Jack's face.

"Who called out the fire department?" the latter muttered as he sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"It needs more than a fire department to get your eyes open," Edna laughed as she gave Bob a similar treatment. "You've got just three minutes to get down to the table or you get nothing to eat," and with the ominous threat she ran from the room.

"Guess she means it," Bob yawned as he threw the bed clothes to one side.

They made it with ten seconds to spare, but, as Jack declared, "a miss is as good as a mile."

"Thought I'd scare you into hustling," Edna declared as she placed a huge plate of hot cakes in front of them.

"I'll call you in about fifteen minutes," Jack said a few minutes later as he stood in front of the house ready to mount his motor cycle.

"Better make it twenty," Bob laughed. "You'll have Switzer on your trail if you go to burning the road before you get out of town."

"He'll have a swell time catching me," Jack declared as he started.

The motor cycle made not the slightest sound as he sped down the street. The putt-putt of the usual

gas engine was absent as the wheel was equipped with a powerful electric motor driven by one of their new cells.

Lake Wesserunsette, a beautiful sheet of water, nearly five miles long, lies to the north of Skowhegan and about six miles distant. Here the Goldens had a summer cottage situated near the shore of the lake in the midst of the tall pines. "The Shadow of the Pines" as they had named the cottage, was a large comfortably furnished house and during July and August the family spent much of their time there. But this summer they were a little later than usual and had not as yet opened the house.

"Just sixteen minutes," Jack declared after a glance at his watch, as he leaned the motor cycle against the steps of the front porch.

A moment later and he was sending the "call" to his brother by pressing a small switch at one end of the case. Almost at once the answer came as clear and distinct as on the previous night when they had been in the same house.

"Distance don't seem to cut any figure at all does it?" he declared a moment later after they had congratulated each other.

"Doesn't seem to that's a fact," Bob replied. "I'm coming up and we'll have a sail in the Sprite," he added.

Leaving his motor cycle leaning against the steps

Jack quickly ran down to the boat house. Fortunately he had the key in his pocket and in a moment he had the door open. Everything was as he remembered to have left it the previous summer. Slung above the water was the Sprite, an eighteen foot boat, which, the summer before they had equipped with an electric motor in place of the gas engine.

"She's sure a beauty," Jack thought as he gazed at the boat's graceful lines

He at once set to work lowering her to the water and had just finished when Bob arrived.

"You didn't lose any time getting up here," Jack said.

"Seventeen minutes exactly."

"Then I beat you by a minute," Jack laughed. "But did you think to bring up a cell?"

"Two of 'em," Bob replied taking two brass cylinders, about half as large again as those which they had used for the radio outfits, from his inside coat pocket.

It was the work of but a moment to slip one of the cells in place and in less than ten minutes they were ploughing through the waters of the lake, Jack at the helm while Bob lounged in the stern his hand within reach of the switch which controlled the speed of the boat.

"Isn't this simply glorious?" Bob asked as he pushed the switch over another notch.

"It sure is the life," Jack agreed enthusiastically, as he headed the boat down the lake.

"I wonder just how far these pocket radios are going to be good for," Bob said pushing the switch over still another point.

"Only way to find out is to try 'em, I reckon," Jack replied.

"How does this plan strike you? After dinner we'll show Edna how to use it, and then we'll leave one set with her and we'll take the other and run up to the cabin at Moosehead. That'll give it a test of fifty miles. We'll stay all night and come down in the morning."

"Fine. That'll be just the thing. We haven't been up there since Spring and perhaps I can get a mess of trout although it's rather late," Jack agreed.

They made a complete circuit of the lake and it was close to eleven o'clock when they returned to the boat house.

"Our last two summers have been pretty strenuous," Bob remarked as they were walking up to the cottage, "and I for one will be pretty fairly content to spend a quiet time here."

"Same here," Jack laughed. "But I'll bet something'll turn up before the summer is over to make it exciting."

As it turned out Jack was correct but even he had little idea at the time just how exciting that summer

was destined to be. It is indeed fortunate that the future is hidden from us. Had the two boys known what was in store for them it is doubtful if they would have returned to their home in the village in as high spirits.

Edna Golden, two years younger than Jack, readily agreed to help her big brothers. Indeed she was always interested in whatever they were doing and, as Jack often remarked, "she was a splendid pal."

"If nothing happens we'll call you at five o'clock." Bob said as he stood by the side of his motor cycle in front of the house. "I'm allowing plenty of time for a puncture," he added as he mounted the wheel and started off down the street closely followed by Jack.

Moosehead Lake lies about fifty miles to the north of Skowhegan and the log cabin, owned by Mr. Golden, was situated about half way up the lake, which is all of forty miles long.

The dirt road, rough in many places, made fast traveling on a motor cycle uncomfortable, not to say dangerous. However, as their way led through only three or four small villages, they usually made the trip in about two hours and a half. It was but a little past one o'clock when they started so, as Bob had said, they considered that they had plenty of time.

At half past two they had covered forty miles.

Bob was riding ahead with Jack some thirty feet behind when, suddenly the latter heard a loud report like the crack of a pistol. He looked up quickly to see Bob's wheel wobbling from side to side as the rider made frantic efforts to keep it under control. He succeeded finally and Jack rode slowly up.

"Must have struck a sharp rock," Bob declared as he examined the rear tire of his machine. "I should say so," he added a moment later as he pointed to a ragged cut nearly two inches long.

"It's a good thing we've got some blowout patches in the kit," Jack declared as he led his wheel to the side of the road and leaned it against a tree.

Bob led his wheel a few feet down the road to where a large maple tree offered a shady spot and the two boys at once set to work to make a temporary repair. They found that the inner tube was split for a distance of several inches, too long a split to be repaired with a patch. Fortunately, however, Jack had a spare tube in his kit and in less than a half hour they were ready to start again.

"I guess she'll hold till we get there," Bob said as he finished wrapping tape over the cut.

Just as he was leading the machine out into the road a big car whirled by in a cloud of dust.

"Did you see those two men on the back seat?" Jack asked as he led his wheel up beside Bob.

"No, I didn't notice them particularly. Why?"

"Nothing; only unless I'm greatly mistaken they were two of those fellows that we caught making moonshine up on Mount Bigelow last summer," Jack replied quietly.

"Nonsense. Those fellows are in states prison serving a good long term," Bob declared. "You must be seeing things."

"Mebbe. But I'll never forget that guy with the hooked nose, and if that wasn't he it was his twin brother. Sometimes prisoners escape you know."

"Yes, I know that, but I guess we'd have seen something about it in the papers if they had escaped," Bob replied as he started off.

"Just the same, that was the fellow all right," Jack muttered to himself as he followed suit.

Without further mishap they reached the cabin shortly before five o'clock.

"Gee, but the old camp looks good," Jack declared as they led the wheels around to a small shed behind the cabin.

"She sure does," Bob agreed. "I hardly know which place I like the better, here or at Wesserun-sette."

At exactly five o'clock Bob pressed the switch on the little case and, with the receiver at his ear, waited anxiously. However, he had not long to wait, for almost immediately Edna's voice came to him clear

and loud. Even Jack, without a receiver, could distinguish the words.

"Distance doesn't seem to make a bit of difference, does it?" Bob said after they had both talked with Edna.

"Not a bit so far as I could see. You'd thought she was right here in this room," Jack agreed enthusiastically. "But how about some eats? If you'll get a fire going and mix up a batch of biscuits I'll see how the trout are feeling about it."

"Righto. You do your part and you'll find the biscuits on the job all right."

Jack took his favorite rod from where it hung on the wall of the room and started for a large brook which emptied into the lake a few hundred yards below the cabin. It was a favorite fishing place of his and he was almost sure of at least a fair catch. Nor was he disappointed on this occasion. He found the trout hungry and in less than a half hour twelve of the speckled beauties, none weighing less than two pounds, were strung on a notched stick.

"There, I guess that'll be enough for supper and breakfast and to take down home to the folks," he thought as he reeled in his line.

Just as he was about to pick up the string of fish he heard a noise just behind him and, looking up, he saw a man, standing just at the edge of the woods, staring at him. He was an evil-looking man, tall

and broad shouldered, evidencing great strength. His face was covered with a course stubble of several days' grows, and his shaggy eyebrows were drawn in what seemed to be a perpetual frown.

"Howdy, sonny. How's the fishing?" The man evidently was striving to make his voice sound pleasant as he stepped forward.

Now Jack never did like to be called sonny and the term coming from this trampish appearing man made the hot blood rush to his face. But he quickly got his feelings under control and replied pleasantly enough.

"It's first rate, thank you," and held up the string for the man's inspection.

"You shore have got some good uns. How 'bout givin' a feller a couple fer supper?"

"You are welcome to them," Jack replied as he took two of the fish from the stick and handed them to the man.

The man grunted something which might have been thanks as he dropped them into a sack which he carried in his right hand.

"You stayin' round here?" he demanded.

"Not long. Only over night."

"Reckon that's your place back thar." The man pointed over his shoulder.

"Yes, that's our cabin."

"Wall, reckon I'll be trudgin'," and, throwing the

sack over his shoulder the man started up stream and in a moment was lost to sight in the thick woods.

All the time Jack had been talking with the man he had been searching his memory. Where had he seen that man before? That he had seen him he was sure, for his face as well as his voice was strangely familiar. But try as he might he was unable to place him.

"Guess I'd better catch a couple more to make up for those two," he thought as he picked up his rod. The fish were as hungry as ever and it was but the work of a few minutes to replenish the string.

"I wonder where that fellow was bound for," he thought as he again reeled in his line.

Some impulse, which he could not have explained, urged him to follow the man.

"Guess it's a fool thing to do," he muttered as he hid the fish and his rod in a thick clump of bushes, "but I've just got to follow that fellow a little way anyhow."

Just above where he had been fishing the trees grew close to the edge of the stream. Careful not to make the slightest noise the boy stole through the thick woods, his ears keen to catch any sound. Every few yards he stopped to listen. He had no real thought that the man would expect him to follow him but he was well acquainted with the character of men of his type and knew the value of caution.

He had followed the course of the brook for about a quarter of a mile and had about decided to turn back when suddenly the sound of voices reached his quick ears. He listened but although he could hear the voices plainly enough he was unable to catch the words.

"Guess they're talking canuck," he thought as he stole cautiously forward. As he advanced the voices grew more distinct and soon he was able to catch a word now and then. Although he was somewhat familiar with the language, the men were talking so rapidly that he was unable to get the drift of the conversation. That there were at least three men present he was certain and he judged that the man he had encountered was telling the others about the meeting. He crept a little nearer and finally, peering through the thick undergrowth, he caught sight of a small cabin built of unpeeled logs and evidently quite new. Just in front of the door he could see three men standing. One was the man he had met and, it was plain that the others were half-breeds.

For some moments he crouched trying to catch the drift of the talk. But, to his disappointment, he was unable to do so, although he was sure that the men were talking about him. This belief was strengthened by the fact that a number of times the man, to whom he had given the fish, pointed toward the Golden cabin.

But after a few minutes the men went into the cabin and, greatly disappointed, Jack started back.

"They're sure tough customers and I'll bet a fish hook they're up to something," he thought as he made his way quickly through the thick forest.

CHAPTER II.

THE VANISHING CABIN.

"SEEMS to me you've been gone long enough to catch all the fish in the lake," Bob greeted his brother on his return to the cabin.

"Well, I got a few of them," and Jack held up the string for his brother's inspection.

"They're beauties all right, but it must have been a long time between bites," Bob declared.

"Not so long at that," Jack replied. "The truth of the matter is I was frying other fish a good part of the time. But just let me get one of these big ones cleaned and in the pan and I'll tell you all about it."

Some ten minutes later, while the big trout was sputtering in the hot fat, Jack told his brother about his meeting with the man in the woods.

"Did the cabin look like it had been build recently?" Bob asked as soon as he had finished.

"Sure did. In fact one end is not quite finished yet," Jack replied.

"I wonder who owns the land it is built on."

"I'm not sure but I believe it's on our land. If it isn't it's not very far from it," Jack said thoughtfully, then, as Bob did not speak at once, he continued. "I probably wouldn't have thought so much of it and probably wouldn't have followed the fellow if it hadn't been for the fact that somehow or other I couldn't get rid of the feeling that I had seen him before, but I can't for the life of me remember where or when."

"You say you think they were talking about us?"

"Yes, I think so," Jack replied slowly. "You see they talked so fast that I could only get a word now and then, but he kept pointing over in this direction and it's a pretty safe bet that he was talking about this cabin or about us. But what do you think about it? What do you suppose they have built that cabin there for?"

"Ask me something easy," Bob replied as he took a pan of biscuits out of the oven. "If you could only remember where you have seen the fellow we might make a guess."

"Mebbe it will come to me before long," Jack replied as he turned the fish over in the pan.

While they were eating their supper they discussed the matter but could come to no satisfactory conclusion.

"Do you think there's any likelihood of those fellows interfering with us tonight?" Jack asked as they were washing the dishes.

"Oh, I hardly think so," Bob replied. "But if you are afraid we can lock up and beat it for Skowhegan."

"Afraid nothing," Jack laughed. "Who said anything about being afraid? I was only wondering, that's all."

"I was only joking, of course. I don't think they will bother us, but if they should we've got an automatic here and I guess we can take care of ourselves."

Several times during the evening they tried to get Edna on the pocket radio but failed.

"Guess she's gone out somewhere," Bob said; "or else something's the matter with the machine."

But their fears were set at rest when, just as they were about to start to get ready for bed, they heard the buzz of the caller and Edna's voice came to them. For some time they talked with their sister and also with Mr. Golden, but they said nothing regarding Jack's adventure, thinking that it might worry the folks.

Bob had just extinguished the light after seeing that everything was securely locked up, and was about to jump into bed when Jack said:

"I've got it, Bob."

"Have, hey? Well I sure hope it isn't catching."

"I mean I've thought where I saw that man."

"Oh, that's different. Where was it? "

"He was one of those men who held us up last spring when we were coming back from Musquacook Lake."

"You don't mean it?"

"I do, though. Funny I didn't think of it before. But it's as plain as day now."

"Then they must have gotten away from the revenue officers or else they have broken jail. Good gracious, it looks as though all the bootleggers were escaping, or else you've been seeing things." Bob laughed as he pulled the blanket over himself.

It seemed to Bob that he had hardly fallen asleep when he awoke with a start. He was conscious that a noise had disturbed his sleep, but of the character of the sound he had no idea. For some minutes he listened. The sound of deep breathing from the bed on the opposite side of the room assured him that Jack had not been disturbed. Then, just as he was about to turn over and go to sleep again, the sound was repeated. He strained his ears to listen. Someone was fumbling with the lock on the front door. As soon as he was convinced that someone was trying to gain admittance to the cabin he slipped from the bed and stole across the room. Reaching

his brother's bed he gave him a slight shake at the same time whispering his name.

"S——h," he cautioned as Jack sat up in bed and started to speak. "Someone's trying to get in."

This statement brought Jack up wide awake.

"Where are they?" he whispered.

"At the front door. Listen."

"Yep, I hear 'em now. Let's get something on," and slipping from the bed Jack drew on his trousers and shoes and Bob did the same.

"Now what?" Jack asked.

"Wait a minute till I get the gun," Bob whispered as he groped his way softly to the table in the living room.

Pulling open the drawer he grasped the revolver in his right hand and stole quietly across the room until he was close to the door. The fumbling with the knob had ceased but, pressing his ear against the door, he could hear the faint sound of whispers. Then the knob was turned again.

"Who's there?" Bob called loudly.

For a moment there was no reply, then a voice said.

"Open door, queek."

"Who are you and what do you want?" Bob asked.

"Never mind dat," was the growling answer. "You open door or we bust her open."

"So that's your game," Bob answered in loud tones. "All right. Go ahead and do your busting, but you'll get a chunk of cold lead where it'll do the most good if you do."

At this threat the boys heard a muttered oath followed by footsteps which soon died away and all was still.

"Guess that kinder took the wind out of their sails," Jack laughed.

"Looks like it, but they may be back," Bob agreed. "What time is it?"

"Almost three o'clock."

"Well, I guess we'd better stay awake," Bob advised. "It'll be light in another half hour or so."

Evidently Jack had been right, for they heard nothing more of the intruders.

"We've got lots of time. It isn't five o'clock yet. Let's go and take a squint at that cabin. What do you say?" They had just finished washing the breakfast dishes and Bob made the proposal as he was washing out the drying towel.

"I believe you're a mind reader," Jack declared. "I was just about to propose the same thing."

"I suppose it's a fool move, but I would like to know what those fellows are up to."

"Same here. Come on."

"We're pretty near there," Jack whispered a few

minutes later as he grasped Bob by the arm. "See that big pine just ahead there? Well the cabin is just this side of that."

Cautiously they crept forward till they were crouching behind the bush which had sheltered Jack the evening before.

"Take a peep just round this bush and you'll see the cabin," Jack whispered.

"Guess you've got your wires crossed," Bob whispered a moment later as he drew his head back. "I can't see any cabin."

"What do you mean, can't see any cabin? Let me look."

A moment later Jack drew back and Bob had all he could do to keep from laughing as he caught the expression on the younger boy's face.

"What do you know about that?" he gasped.

"Did you see it?" Bob whispered.

Jack looked about him.

"This is the place. I'm dead sure of it. See here's a twig I broke off," he whispered.

"But what about the cabin?"

"That's what I'd like to know. What about it? It was there last night and this morning it's gone. Just vanished into thin air."

"Are you sure you've got the right place?"

"Of course I am. Didn't I tell you I remember

breaking off that twig? Just give me a good hard pinch will you? Ouch! I'm awake all right," and the boy began rubbing his arm where Bob had pinched him.

"Bob, I know it's an awful hard thing to ask you to believe but as sure as I'm alive there was a log cabin right out there just this side of that big pine last night. I tell you I saw it and I heard the door slam when they closed it."

"Well, let's look around a bit and see what we can find," Bob proposed as he stepped out from behind the bush. "I don't believe there's anybody around here now."

Jack seemed somewhat dazed as he stepped out from behind the bush, and as for Bob, he hardly knew what to say. He had the utmost confidence in his brother, but his statement to the effect that there had been a log cabin on the spot, where they now stood, the day before, was, to say the least, staggering. Not only was there no cabin in sight but a careful examination failed to reveal the slightest evidence that there had ever been one there.

"It beats me," Jack declared, as he leaned against a tall spruce and looked at his brother. "I wonder if I'm getting loony in my old age," he said in a tone so solemn that Bob burst out laughing.

Bob's laughter seemed to relieve the tension and, after a moment's pause Jack asked,

"Honest injun now, Bob, what do you make of it?"

Bob hesitated for an instant before replying. He knew that Jack would lay great stress on what he might say and he wanted to be sure and say the right thing.

"To tell the truth, Jack boy," he began finally, "I'm up a stump to know what to think. I know you're not in the habit of seeing things 'what hain't', but this time it sure looks as though a trick of vision had been put over on you. That is if you are not mistaken about this being the place. You can see for yourself that there's no cabin here now and, so far as I can see, there never has been one."

"Guess I'll have to see an eye doctor when we get down to Skowhegan," Jack laughed weakly. "This is the place all right and I saw, or thought I saw a log cabin, right where I'm standing, only last night. That's all I know about it."

"And I guess we'll have to let it go at that for the present at any rate," Bob said putting as much consolation into his voice as possible.

But little was said as they made their way back to the cabin. Each was busy with his own thoughts.

When they reached the cabin they at once set to work and dressed the remainder of the trout and packed them in a small wooden box which was fastened securely to the rear of Bob's motor cycle.

"Now just as soon as I get locked up we'll be ready to start," Bob declared as he led the way into the cabin.

But as he opened the door they heard the buzzing of the radio instrument which they had left on the table.

"That's Edna," Jack cried as he picked it up. "Hello."

"Goodness, but I've been trying to get you for about an hour," Edna's voice came from out of the ether. "How soon are you coming down?"

"Let's see. It's half past eight now. We'll be there in time for dinner if nothing happens. Tell Jane we are bringing a big mess of trout." Jack replied.

"Well there's a man here to see you. Says his name is Jim Carson and he's a revenue officer."

"Jim Carson! He's the man who was hunting the moonshiners up on Mount Bigelow last summer," Jack declared. "What does he want?"

"Wants to see you, and he's in a hurry so you'd better get a hustle."

"Hustle is our middle name when Jim's after us," Jack laughed. "Tell him we'll try to make it by eleven o'clock."

"What do you suppose Jim wants?" Jack asked turning to Bob who was standing close by listening to the conversation.

"Ask me something easy, but he can have it if it's anything we can give him, that goes without saying," Bob replied and Jack nodded assent.

The officer was sitting on the front porch when, at five minutes past eleven, the two boys dismounted in front of the house.

"Well, you boys didn't lose any time getting here." The officer laughed as he grasped their hands.

"I guess we did hit it up a bit," Bob grinned. "When the United States Government calls we want to be 'Jonnie on the spot' you know."

"Just excuse us one minute till we put these wheels around back and get this box of trout unpacked and we'll be with you. Of course we'll have to stay to dinner and we'll show you what real trout tastes like."

They were back on the porch in less than ten minutes and the officer at once plunged into the reason for his visit.

"I've got a big job on hand," he began, "and I thought perhaps I could get you boys to help me out. I've been working at it now for over a month without any success. You see there's an enormous quantity of liquor being brought over the border. We've confiscated a lot of it in different places and more than one man has gone up for a good long term but we haven't yet been able to find out just

where it is brought across nor who brings it. Also we don't know how it is being done. In fact about all we do know is that it comes and that there must be quite a gang concerned in it."

"You say you don't know just where it is brought across," Bob said as the officer paused. "But do you have any idea?"

"Well we are pretty sure that the most of it at any rate goes through Jackman and for that reason we think it must be somewhere up that way."

"How many men have you on the job?" Bob asked.

"There's only Lou and myself. You remember Lou, don't you?"

"Sure do and he's a mighty fine fellow," Jack answered while Bob nodded assent.

"He's all of that and then some," the officer declared. "Best man I knew of for a job of this kind, but they've got us stumped so far."

"And what do you think we can do?" Bob asked.

"Well, you see it's like this. You boys know the country up that way and Lou and I figured that if you'd go up there and let on that you were on a fishing trip or camping or something of the kind that, being boys, no one would suspect you and that you might succeed where we have failed. You see if you could find out where they bring the stuff across we could probably nab them."

"Well, I'm sure that we'll be glad to help you if you think we can," Bob declared after a moment's pause. "That is, provided Father doesn't object."

"Good," the officer said, and a relieved look came to his face. "I hope I'll be able to persuade your father to let you make the try."

Just then Mr. Golden himself came up the walk and Bob quickly introduced him to their visitor.

"I feel as though I had known you for a long time," Mr. Golden smiled as he took the other's hand. "These boys of mine have had so much to say about you."

They resumed their seats and the officer lost no time in acquainting Mr. Golden with the object of his visit.

"I hardly know what to say," he said as soon as he had finished. "These boys of mine are great when it comes to getting into adventures, though I must acknowledge that they always seem to land on their feet like a cat," and he smiled as he glanced proudly at the two boys. "But I'm afraid this is pretty risky," he continued. "Some of those men are pretty desperate characters."

"You are right there, sir," the officer acknowledged, "but I think that the fact that they are boys will protect them."

"Sure it will, Father," Jack broke in. "Please let us go. Just see how our country needs us."

Mr. Golden's eyes twinkled as he turned to his younger son.

"So do Mother and I," he said fondly. "But there's the dinner gong. We'll see what Mother has to say about it after dinner. Did you bring down any trout?"

"We sure did, and if they're as good as those we had for supper last night you've got a feast ahead of you," Bob declared as he got up and followed his father into the house.

Nothing was said of the matter until desert had been served, and then Mr. Golden explained the matter to his wife. At first Mrs. Golden shook her head, declaring that she would never give her consent, but both Bob and Jack knew how to coax her most effectively and finally she agreed to leave it to their father's judgment. Both boys felt sure then that the victory was as good as won and they were not long in winning their father over.

"But I want it understood that you are to be very careful and not get into danger," he insisted.

"We'll be very careful," both boys promised, and Bob added: "We'll remember what you said about the cats and be sure to land on our feet every time."

"I hardly know what directions to give you," the officer declared a little later after Mr. Golden had returned to his office and they were once more sit-

ting on the porch. There's a big summer camp about six miles from Jackman which is almost on the border line between Maine and Canada. Now I think it will be a good plan for you to go there and engage board for a week or two. It's fine fishing there according to reports and you can do enough of it to avert suspicion. You can make that your headquarters and take trips on your motor cycles as you think best. Of course the government will pay your expenses and if you are successful I think I can assure you that Uncle Sam will not be ungrateful."

"We wouldn't want anything more than our expenses," Bob declared, and Jack agreed heartily.

"How soon can you start?"

"We'll go tomorrow, won't we, Bob?" Jack replied eagerly.

"I don't see why not. We can get ready in an hour or two, I guess," Bob answered.

"That'll be fine," the officer assured them. "Now I have already arranged things so that you can always get in touch with me with as little delay as possible. You see, I took it for granted that you would go in for it," he smiled. "Here is an address and a telephone number. There will always be someone there night and day who will know where I am and how to reach me."

The officer left soon after, saying that he had to catch the afternoon train for Bangor.

"But I'll see you again within a few days if nothing happens. And remember, I don't want or expect you to take any chances where there will be any danger," were his parting words.

"Well, I can feel it in my bones that we are in for a big time," Jack declared gleefully as they waved him good-bye.

CHAPTER III.

BOB HAS AN ADVENTURE.

THE little town of Jackman lies almost due north of Skowhegan and is about seventy-five miles distant. Numerous lakes and ponds, noted for their fish, abound within a few miles of the town, which is a sporting center. The road closely follows the Kennebec River for nearly fifty miles. At the little village, called The Forks, due to the fact that here the Dead River joins the Kennebec, it leaves the river and bears slightly to the west.

"Don't see that the place has changed much," Jack smiled as shortly before noon the following day the boys stopped their motor cycles in front of the little hotel at The Forks. "Place looks about the same as it did last May when we were here with the drive."

"But the road don't look much as it did then," Bob laughed.

"You're right there and I guess we'd have had a tussle to have gotten these wheels through the last time we were here."

"What mak' dem wheel go, oui?"

The boys had enjoyed a good dinner and had come from the hotel to resume their trip to find a big French Canadian closely examining the motor cycles which they had left standing by the porch.

"This electric motor makes it go," Bob replied pleasantly as he pointed to the machine.

"She go fast, oui?"

"Makes pretty good time," Bob smiled.

"You sell one to me?" the Frenchman asked, pulling a huge roll of bills from his pocket. "How much?"

"Sorry, but they are not for sale," Bob replied as he took hold of the handle-bars of his wheel and started to lead it away from the porch.

"I geeve two hunnerd dollar for heem," the man insisted, grabbing hold of the saddle.

"I said they were not for sale," Bob declared, a bit nettled by the fellow's attitude.

"I mak' heem two hunnerd an' feety dollar."

"You can't have it at any price," Bob snapped.

The Frenchman still held the wheel by the saddle and now a flash of anger replaced the grin which had suffused his face.

"My name Pierre Harbaugh. I beeg man from up north. You no sell heem me, mebbly I geet heem for nottin', oui."

"I don't care a rap what your name is or how big

you are. These wheels belong to us and they are not for sale and that's all there is to it. So kindly take your hand off that saddle," Bob's eyes snapped as he gave the wheel a sudden strong pull.

The big Frenchman had been leaning heavily against the wheel at the moment and the sudden movement threw him off his balance and he fell full length on the ground.

"Come on quick," Bob shouted to Jack, who was standing by his wheel a few feet away.

At the same instant he sprang into his saddle and threw over the switch and by the time the Frenchman was on his feet the two boys were hitting a lively pace up the road.

"Pleasant disposition that fellow's got," Jack said, as he drew up beside his brother as soon as they were well away from the hotel.

"And I reckon he's got plenty of muscle to back it up with," Bob grinned as he slackened his speed slightly. "Don't think I'd care to meet him on a dark night."

"They reached Jackman about three o'clock and rode through the town without stopping. Several of the inhabitants looked with wonder as the boys rode slowly along the main street. They missed the usual putt-putt of the ordinary motor cycle.

"This is the trail," Bob declared after they had gone about two miles from the village.

He had stopped at a point where a broad woods road joined the main highway.

"It's about four miles right up the side of the mountain, and I imagine we'll have to walk a good part of the way," he said as he turned off.

The trail, however, was in better shape than he had dared hope and, although they were obliged to dismount and push the wheels every little while, they were able to ride the greater part of the way.

"We sure are getting up in the world," Jack panted an hour later as he pushed his wheel over a particularly rough place.

"Never mind, son. We must be about there," Bob laughed, wiping the perspiration from his face.

He was right, for another ten minutes brought them to the camp. It was a beautiful location, on the very summit of a lofty range of hills nearly two thousand feet above sea level. The grounds of the camp bordered on a pond nearly circular in shape and about two miles in diameter. The camp itself consisted of a large central dining house and a dozen small log cabins.

The host, a burly Irishman named Pat Hogan, met them as they rode up to the central building.

"Faith an' ye don't mane ter tell me thot ye rode up the mountain on them things," and a broad grin spread over the landlord's face.

"Well, I'll have to own up that we had to push

them part of the way," Bob smiled. "But we got here, and now the question is can we stay."

"Sure ye kin stay, as long as ye want to. I have jest one cabin vacant an' the price of it wid meals is forty dollars the week fer the two of ye."

"That's all right and we'll take it for a week anyhow, and if the fishing is good we probably will stay longer," Bob said as he pulled out his pocketbook and handed the man four ten-dollar bills.

It took the boys but a short time to get settled in their new quarters, which they found very comfortable.

"What did you think of mine host Hogan?" Jack asked as he fastened a fly to his leader.

"Seemed all right. Why?" Bob replied.

"Oh, nothing; only it struck me that he seemed a bit suspicious of us. Probably my imagination. Guess all detectives feel that way more or less."

"Careful with that tongue," Bob cautioned. "We must remember that above all things we must be careful not to give anyone a hint as to what we are up here for. If we do we might as well pack up and go back home. There are quite a lot of people around this camp and there's no knowing who may be mixed up in some way in this liquor business."

"Mum's the word," Jack said as he laid his fishing pole on the bed. "Got your tackle all ready?"

"All ready but this leader. I think it needs some

new flies. But you aren't going out till after supper, are you?"

"No, but there goes the supper bell now," Jack replied as he started for the door.

During the summer early in the morning or just before sundown are the best times for fishing, and for that reason at most of the camps supper is served early.

At the time there were about twenty guests at the camp and they were all strangers to the boys as most of them were from distant cities. After an excellent supper they sought the landlord to see about engaging a canoe for the week.

"How far are we from the border?" Bob asked when the arrangements had been completed.

Pat Hogan laughed.

"Faith an' ye'll niver be iny nearer to it than ye were at supper time. Ye see the line runs right through the dining-room, so it does. One end of it in Canada an' the tother in the United States."

"I guess we ate supper in Canada then," Jack laughed. "We were on the north side of the room."

"Ye sure did thin," Mr. Hogan assured him.

There were several canoes out on the lake during the evening and the trout were biting hungrily. The boys pulled into the wharf just before dark with a string of twelve trout, the largest tipping the scales at eight pounds and none under four.

"I'll say that's real fishing," Jack declared as he held the big one up.

"We'll take them up to the kitchen and then I'm going to hit the hay, even if it is only eight o'clock," Bob said as he pulled the canoe from the water. "I'm tired and I don't care who knows it."

"Ditto," Jack agreed as he led the way toward the cook house.

"You mak one beeg catch, oui," the half-breed cook assured them as they held the fish up for his inspection. "Dat one ees the beegest dis year so far."

To reach their cabin the boys had to pass close in front of the office, a small room opening out of the dining-room. As they came in front of the building Bob, who was slightly in the lead, suddenly stopped and grasped Jack by the arm.

"Look who's in the room," he whispered.

"It's that fellow who tried to buy one of the bikes," Jack whispered after a quick glance.

"That's what I thought," Bob said. "Come on; let's get to the cabin before he sees us."

"Now the big question is, did that man follow us up here or is his being here only a coincidence," Bob said as soon as they were in their cabin and had locked the door.

"Doesn't look much like a coincidence to me," Jack declared. "You remember we told Sim while

we were eating dinner at The Forks where we were going, and so he could have found out easily enough."

"I believe you're right about it, and he'd steal one or both of them if he got the chance," Bob agreed. "It's a good thing we put them in here instead of in the shed."

"He'll stand watching all right," Jack agreed. "But now that we are here what are we going to do toward finding the liquor runners? Seems to me that it's time we made some definite plans."

"I suppose so but not to-night. I'm too tired and I'm afraid my brain wouldn't function properly if I tried to work it now. Let's sleep on it and then we'll go into a committee of the whole to-morrow," and Bob began to pull off his clothes.

How long he had been asleep Bob did not know but, suddenly, he found himself wide awake. Something had wakened him he knew but what it was he had no idea. It was pitch dark in the little cabin. On the other side of the tiny bed-room he could hear Jack's regular breathing and knew that he was sound asleep.

"Now I wonder what—" he thought just as the shrill weird cry of the loon rang through the stillness of the night.

"I guess that was it," he thought, and then, from

far off in the forest came the "whoo, whoo, whoo" of the owl.

He was about to let his head fall back on the pillow again when the cry of the loon was repeated. Instantly he was straining his ears to listen. There was a false note in that last cry. It did not ring true.

"If a loon made that noise, I'm a Dutchman," he muttered.

And then the hoot of the owl was repeated, this time nearer than at first.

Those are signals sure as guns, he thought. That last might pass for an owl but that loon has got a lot to learn.

While these thoughts were running through his brain he had slipped from the bed and was silently pulling his clothes on over his pajamas. A glance at the luminous face of his wrist watch told him that it was nearly two o'clock.

"No use to wake Jack up," he thought as he stole silently toward the door. "I'll just take a look around."

Carefully he unlocked the door and, removing the key from the lock, he stepped outside. After he had closed the door he locked it from the outside and dropped the key in his pocket.

"Now he'll be all right I guess," he thought as he stood and listened.

Save for a faint rustle as a light breeze stirred the

tree tops no sound broke the stillness of the night until the loon cry was once more borne to his ears.

"I've heard too many loons cry to be fooled by that fellow," Bob thought as he stepped from the little porch and felt his way cautiously around to the back of the cabin.

It was so dark that he could hardly see his hand before his face. The thick forest grew close to the back of the cabin which was toward the lake.

"You're not very far off Mr. Fake Loon, and I'm going to see if I can find out what's up," he thought as he carefully felt his way from tree to tree.

Just then the owl gave three more hoots now only a short distance away and slightly to his left.

"He's coming this way pretty fast for a dark night," he thought as he stopped to listen.

But all was still and he started forward again feeling his way cautiously foot by foot to avoid making a noise which might reveal his presence. He well knew the desperate character of the men who were engaged in the nefarious business of whiskey running and was aware that his life might pay the forfeit should he fall into their hands. Of course he was by no means sure that the cries had come from any of these men but he reasoned that no honest man would be making signals at that time of night.

Suddenly he stopped as his quick ear caught a sound a bit to his left. Eagerly he listened. Some-

one or some animal was making his way through the thick woods toward him. Without a sound he threw himself at full length on the ground and listened. Although the man, if it was a man, was making but little noise, Bob could hear him distinctly in the stillness of the forest. Nearer and nearer he came until he could hear his breathing and, although he could see nothing, he knew that it was standing close by his side. And then all doubts regarding what it might be were ended as the man three times imitated the whoop of the owl. Almost at once the false cry of the loon came, now but a little way off to the right.

At once the man started forward again and so closely did he come to the boy that the latter felt his foot brush against his side as he passed. Bob hardly daring to breathe, lay perfectly still until the man was some distance away.

"Another inch or two and he'd have stepped on me," he thought as he rose and stole silently in the direction in which the man had gone. "They are going to meet in a minute or two and if I can only get near enough to hear what they have to say it may be enough to do the trick," he thought.

The signals were not repeated again but, by straining his ears he could hear the man ahead as he pushed his way through the underbrush but these sounds were getting fainter and fainter proving that the man was going faster than Bob dared to attempt.

In a short time he lost the sound altogether, but he still kept on trying as best he could to keep in the right direction. He stopped more often now to listen as he was uncertain whether the man had gotten so far away that he had lost the sound of his steps or had simply stopped. The latter he thought not unlikely and he knew that it behooved him to use every possible caution.

The way was getting more and more difficult as the underbrush, of which there had been but little near the camp, was now very thick and he was obliged to use all his skill to make his way through it without making a noise which might betray him in case he should come near his quarry.

Now as he stopped to listen the soft lap of water hitting the rocks told him that he was nearing the lake. The breeze had stiffened slightly and the sighing of the branches as they swayed to and fro filled his mind with a fear that he might stumble upon the men before he should be able to hear their voices. But, almost as this thought crossed his mind, the sound of subdued talking came to his ears. That he was within a few feet of them he was sure. He listened but, although he could hear their voices he was unable to distinguish any words. Very slowly, and without making the slightest sound, he crept forward. Now, as he stopped once more, he could hear them distinctly.

To his great disappointment, they were speaking in French and, although he knew the language fairly well, he was unable to catch the drift of the conversation, they were talking so rapidly. Several times he caught the word "hooch" and was certain that they were discussing ways and means of bringing liquor across the border.

Although he was not certain he thought that one of the men was the Frenchman who had tried to purchase his wheel. At any rate, he told himself, the voice sounded very much the same.

For some moments he lay there hardly daring to breathe. Then suddenly he sneezed.

CHAPTER IV.

AND IS CAUGHT.

It was, as he afterward told Jack, a good man-sized sneeze, and made noise enough to waken the seven sleepers. Instantly the voices stopped. Poor Bob was in a quandary as to what to do. He knew that it would be useless to beat a retreat as they would be sure to hear him and be upon him before he could much more than get started. So he lay perfectly still hoping that they would attribute the sound to some animal. But, in his heart, he knew that the hope was futile. These men knew perfectly well the sound made by any animal in the Maine woods and would know that the sneeze came from a human throat.

"By gar! Dat some man close here," he heard one of them say.

"Oui, I tink you right," the other replied. "We better find heem queek."

Bob hoped that they had no light but this hope was almost immediately dashed to the ground as the light from an electric torch began to play through

the thick woods. He was lying behind a thick clump of bushes and he tried to worm himself into the midst of them hoping they would conceal him.

The two men were now making no pretense of keeping quiet but were crashing this way and that through the underbrush and the boy knew that unless the unexpected happened it was only a question of a few minutes before they would find him. He was debating whether it would not be better to get up and show himself and had decided on making the move when he felt his foot grasped by a powerful pair of hands and he was yanked violently out of his hiding place.

"Me got heem," his captor called as he grabbed him by the shoulder and jerked him to his feet.

The other man was only a few feet away and in another moment had joined them.

By the light of the torch Bob saw that he had been correct in his thought regarding the identity of one of the men. The other was much smaller and, to the best of his knowledge he had never seen him before.

"What you do here, huh?" the big man demanded still retaining his hold on Bob's collar.

"I seem to be just standing here," Bob replied pleasantly.

"Oui. You stand here now, but what for you stand here?"

"You ought to know that," Bob grinned. "You seem to have been responsible for it. I was lying down until you came along."

"I tink you follow us. Try hear what we say, oui? You know what we do to spies here, huh?"

"I'm a pretty good guesser," Bob replied with an ease which he was far from feeling. "But what makes you think I'm a spy?"

"You tink we one fool?" the man cried angrily. Then turning to his companion, he said,

"We tak' heem wid us. Come."

Still keeping a firm hold on Bob's collar he pushed the boy in front of him and ordered him to march. Knowing that it was useless to resist at present Bob did as he was commanded. He could tell by the sound that the smaller man was following close on the steps of his captor. The going was very rough as the underbrush was thick. Bob's mind was working rapidly. He knew that if he did not escape it was almost certain to go hard with him and he was by no means sure that his life was not in danger. They had proceeded but a short distance, though it seemed to Bob that they had been walking a long time, when he bumped into a log which was lying across their path and some eighteen inches from the ground. As he climbed over it a plan flashed into his mind. It was a chance and he determined to risk it. He stepped over the log and his captor fol-

lowed still keeping a firm grasp on his collar. As soon as the man was clear of the log he stopped and said to his companion,

“Look out dat log.”

Bob waited a moment until the man ordered him to go ahead. Then with a sudden jerk he wrenched himself free and turned so as to face his captor. The Frenchman, taken by surprise, stepped back at first and then, with a cry of fury, reached for the boy. And at that instant Bob struck. It was too dark for him to see more than the outline of the man's head but, trusting to luck, he put all the strength of his vigorous young body behind the blow. And it landed just where he had hoped that it would, squarely on the point of the chin. With a grunt the man fell backwards, staggered for a moment, and then crashed over the fallen log carrying the smaller man down with him.

Bob waited but an instant to learn the result of his blow. He heard the men go down and then turned and made his way as rapidly as he dared through the forest. He had gone perhaps a hundred feet when he tripped on a root and plunged headlong on his face. Fortunately, however, the ground was not hard and he was not hurt. As he scrambled to his feet he heard a great crashing in the underbrush behind him.

"Guess I didn't knock him out after all," he thought as he started off again.

His heart sank as he realized that, with the aid of the flashlight, they would be able to make faster time than he dared attempt so rough was the going. Indeed he had not gone more than a couple of hundred feet farther before he knew that they were but a very short distance behind him and he realized that it was a matter of but a few minutes before they would be upon him.

Should he submit to capture a second time or should he make a fight for it? He thought of climbing a tree but dismissed the thought as he knew that such a move would at best only delay his capture.

"You better stop queek or we keel you," Big Pierre panted now only a few feet behind him.

"I won't give up till I have to," he thought as he scrambled up on to a large rock which he had ran into.

Having gained the top of the rock at the expense of a severe bruise on his right shin he started to go down the other side when suddenly his feet flew from beneath him and he felt himself falling. Down, down he went until, just as the thought flashed through his mind that it was taking him an awful while to reach the bottom, he struck water.

The fall was all of thirty feet and he was carried **Tar** beneath the surface. Fortunately he struck feet

first and so was not at all hurt. He felt very thankful that he had struck the lake instead of the hard ground and that the water was deep.

As soon as he could he began to swim for the surface and in another moment his head emerged. Shaking the water from his eyes he saw a beam of light fall on the water only a few feet away. Doubtless the men had heard the splash as he struck the water and had thus been warned in time to avoid following him into the lake. Drawing in a long breath, Bob sank again beneath the surface and swam out into the lake. He kept beneath the water as long as he could hold his breath and then cautiously allowed his head to emerge. Almost at once a beam of light struck full in his eyes and the vicious bark of a revolver, followed by a slight splash only a few inches from his head, caused him to dive once more.

"That was a little too close for comfort," he thought as he started to swim.

When he was forced to come up this time he turned on his back and floated with only his nose and eyes out of water.

"I'll give 'em as small a target as possible," he thought.

He was now so far out from the shore that he had little fear of being hit, even should they be able to locate him with the flash, and he very much doubted their ability to do this. By carefully bending his

head he could see the slim pencil of light playing over the water, but not once did it reach him.

Feeling now fairly safe he began to swim slowly in a direction at right angles to the way he had pursued under water and which he judged was toward the camp. He was careful to make no noise which might reach the ears of his enemies on the shore. Glancing back from time to time he could still see the beam of light as they tried to locate him. But soon it vanished and keeping perfectly still he heard them crashing through the underbrush as they made their way back from the lake.

"Guess they've given it up as a bad job," he chuckled as he started to swim more rapidly now.

He swam for what seemed a long time hoping that he was keeping to the right direction as he had nothing to guide him. Finally just as he was beginning to feel tired his feet touched bottom and in another minute he was sitting on a rock close by the shore.

"It can't be very long before it begins to get light now," he thought.

He had decided that it would be best to wait there until it was light enough to see before trying to find his way back to the camp. He had lost all sense of direction and knew that the chances were that he would take the wrong way should he start in the darkness. And there was always the chance that

he might blunder into the hands of his recent captors.

Fortunately it was a warm night and although he was not very comfortable sitting there in his wet clothes, still he minded it but little.

"It's a good deal better than being in their power," he told himself.

His watch had stopped, the water having worked itself in under the case, and he had no means of knowing the time. He sat with his back propped against a tree and despite the uncomfortable position it was not long before he fell asleep.

He did not know how long he slept but it could not have been very long for when he awoke with a sudden start dawn was just breaking in the East.

"Well a little nap was better than none," he mused as he rose and stretched himself.

He waited a few minutes longer until the light had increased enough to enable him to see his way and then started off along the shore of the lake. He could only guess how far it was back to the camp but he knew that if he followed the shore far enough he was bound to reach his destination sooner or later. But he was in fact much nearer than he thought for inside of twenty minutes he saw the cabin, which he had left a few hours before, looming up through the trees.

'Wonder if Jack has missed me,' he thought as

he took the door key from his pocket and silently pushed it into the key hole.

He stood and listened a moment as he stepped inside the room and could hear the deep regular breathing of his brother from the little bed-room.

"Bet he hasn't opened his peepers," he chuckled as he quickly slipped out of his wet clothes and jumped into bed.

He was asleep almost instantly and the next he knew Jack was shaking him vigorously by the shoulder.

"Make it snappy there," he cried. "The breakfast horn blew some time ago and if you don't hurry up you'll get left on the eats."

Bob was out of bed in an instant and began to pull on his clothes.

"For goodness sake, Bob, what's the matter with your duds? They look as though you had slept between wet sheets in them," Jack declared as he gazed in amazement.

"They do look kinder out of press, that's a fact," Bob agreed with a broad grin.

"I'll say they do. What's the answer? They didn't look that way last night."

"Wait till after breakfast and I'll tell you all about it. It's rather a long story," and Bob, now fully dressed led the way to the dining-room followed by a very much bewildered Jack.

The latter noticed that Bob looked up quickly with an anxious look on his face each time the door opened. He bolted his breakfast as rapidly as he could. They had been at the table not more than ten minutes when he whispered:

"For goodness sake, Bob, are you going to eat all day?"

"Just because you have been eating as though you thought your life depended on how much you could stow away per minute you mustn't think I've been doing the same," Bob smiled. "But I'll be through pretty soon."

Jack waited with what patience he could muster until Bob announced that he had finished.

"Now spring it and for goodness sake make it snappy," Jack ordered as soon as they were back in the cabin.

So Bob told the story of his adventure interrupted many times by exclamations of surprise from his brother.

"You know what p-i-g spells," the latter declared as soon as he had finished. "Peers like you want to have all the fun yourself. Why didn't you let me go with you?"

"Well you see, when I started out I didn't have an idea that I'd be gone more than a few minutes, and I didn't want to pull you out of bed on a wild goose chase. Of course if I had known what was

going to happen I would have taken you along."

"I suppose so," Jack grunted. "But are you sure that it was the fellow who tried to buy the wheels?"

"Certainly I am. I got several good looks at him."

"Well, what's the next move?"

"That's the question before the house. Last night's expedition was sure a very unfortunate affair for us. You see, if those men are the one's we're after they will know now that we are spying on them and it will make our work much more difficult."

"I guess you're right about that," Jack agreed soberly. "Think we'd better call up the captain?"

"Not yet. You see we haven't really got anything to report. We don't even know for sure that they are the men we're after but I have a pretty good sized hunch that they are in the game all right. But we can't report hunches very well and I reckon we'll have to wait till we have something a little more definite. But one thing is certain and that is that we've got to look out for that fellow Pierre. He's sure bad medicine whether he's mixed up in this business or not. It's apt to go hard with us if he ever gets hold of us away from civilization."

"I guess you're right there but I don't think much of this wait stuff. We might wait around here for a week of Sundays without finding out anything."

Bob smiled at his brother's enthusiasm.

"I didn't mean that we should remain inactive. All I wish to impress on you was the futility of going off half cocked. Now I have a plan which has been growing in my mind. Look here a minute." Bob took a large map from his pocket as he spoke.

"Now," he continued as he spread the map out on the table, "you see here's where the border runs between the United States and Canada. Now it strikes me that our best bet is to try to find out the place where they bring the stuff across. Of course it is possible that it is brought right through this camp, but I doubt it. You remember the captain said that they had watched here for a long time and he didn't think that they brought it through here. It would be too risky."

"But just how are we going to go about it?"

"Well my idea is this. You know the boundry line is marked by stones at intervals of about a half a mile so we ought to be able to keep on it pretty closely. Now we'll tell the boss here that we're going on a hike and get him to let us have some grub. Then we'll follow along the border and if we find a place that looks suspicious we'll camp near it and see if anything turns up. Oh, I know it's taking a pretty long shot," he added quickly as he saw a look of doubt on his brother's face, "but it's the best bet I can think of."

"And it's good enough for me," Jack said quickly.

"I was only thinking about that big Frenchman."

"Well of course there's a risk to it but it won't be the first time we've taken them and I fancy we'll be able to steer clear from him."

"Sure we can. When do we start?"

"I suppose right away is as good a time as any other. You get the rolls made up and I'll go see the boss about some provisions."

As he spoke Bob was moving toward the door and was about to open it when a loud knock sounded on it. As he swung it open he gave a slight start of surprise for big Pierre Harbaugh was standing just outside.

"Good morning," Bob said after a moment's pause.

"Mornin'."

It was evident that the man was putting forth an effort to speak pleasantly. This was very surprising to Bob and at once put him on his guard.

"Will you come in?" he invited stepping back into the room.

The big Frenchman followed him.

"Now what can we do for you?"

A broad grin lighted up the evil features of the man as he replied.

"I come ask pardon for las' night. I tink you spy, oui. Now I know you no spy. I geet mad las' night. No mad now. You forgeeve, oui?"

"Sure thing. That's all right," Bob replied easily. "I get mad sometimes myself," he added with a smile.

"Dat ver' bon. I got go to Skowhegan and lak' be friend with boys."

"When do you start?" Bob asked.

"Ver' queek."

"Well it's all right so far as I'm concerned," Bob assured him and after a little more talk Pierre took his departure again protesting his friendship.

"Pretty thin, hey?" Jack said as soon as their caller was out of sight.

"Not even a good veneer," Bob laughed. "He altogether overdid it. But I have a hunch that he thinks he put it over on us."

"Oh, he swallowed it hook, line and sinker. There's not a bit of doubt about it," Jack assured him. "But what do you suppose was his idea?"

"It confirms my suspicion that he's one of the liquor runners. Of course his object was to throw us off his trail."

"And the plot thickens, hey?"

"It's thick enough all right. And now I guess we'd better wait a bit and watch Mr. Pierre."

For about a half an hour they watched from the window and at the end of that time were rewarded by seeing the Frenchman come out from the office and start rapidly off on the trail toward Jackman.

"He's going somewhere all right," Jack declared.

"Somewhere is right," Bob laughed. "Only the word is rather indefinite."

"Well we won't be apt to find out anything more by sitting here."

"Right, son. I'll go get the grub and we'll be off."

Bob had no trouble in getting what he wanted from the owner of the camp who showed no surprise at the request. Such hiking trips were common at the camp and he was always prepared to outfit parties. The boys had brought with them their cooking utensils and their preparations were quickly made.

"Reckon we'd better take the cells with us," Bob declared as he proceeded to remove the cell from his wheel."

"Good thing you thought of it," Jack said as he followed suit.

They had kept the wheels in the cabin refusing the offer of the proprietor to keep them in an out shed.

"There, I guess we're all ready now," Bob declared after he had added the cell to the contents of his pack.

A number of the guests of the camp, who were walking about the clearing as they started off, wished them good luck, but none asked them where they were going.

CHAPTER V.

BOB GOES TO SLEEP AND THE CABIN VANISHES AGAIN.

"S-s—H!"

Bob, who was a few feet in advance of his brother, held up his hand as a signal for him to stop. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon and they had been pushing their way through the thick forest for several hours. It had been hard traveling as the underbrush was dense and several times it had taken them a half hour or more before they could locate the stones which marked the boundary line between the United States and Canada.

"What's the matter?" Jack whispered as he advanced cautiously to meet his brother.

"There's a small cabin about three rods ahead of us and I think someone is in it. Listen."

The sound of a man's voice came to them but he was speaking French and speaking it so rapidly that, although they strained their ears for some moments, they were unable to catch more than a word now and then.

"I think there's three of them there," Jack whis-

pered as he crept forward a few feet to where he could catch a glimpse of the cabin.

He stole softly back a few minutes later and Bob knew, from the look on his face, that he was very much excited.

"That cabin is exactly like the one I saw up at Moosehead," he whispered as soon as he was beside Bob. "And what's more one of the men is the fellow who was in that other cabin. I mean the man who spoke to me while I was fishing. He came to the door while I was watching and looked around.

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely."

"Well I don't know that there's anything so strange about the cabin looking the same as the other one, the one that vanished. They build them very much alike up here."

"I know they do, but—"

"But what?"

"Nothing. I was just wondering."

"Well, I wish you'd do your wondering out loud. Here's a time when two heads are better than one."

"I was just wondering how they happened to build two of them so exactly alike. But what had we better do now?"

"I think we'd better watch right here for awhile," Bob replied after a moment's thought.

"My idea exactly, but don't you think it would

be a good plan to make a detour round in front and see if we can find any signs of a trail? That cabin must be pretty near on the line."

"Good idea," Bob agreed. "But we must be mighty careful."

They at once struck off through the woods moving cautiously and keeping a good distance away from the cabin. It took them nearly an hour to reach the opposite side of it and they were obliged to confess that they had not seen anything that even remotely resembled a trail.

"Well, I guess we're on a cold scent," Bob declared as he stopped and wiped the perspiration from his face.

"Looks like it," Jack agreed. "But what I can't understand is why anyone should want to build a cabin away off here in the wilderness."

"If we knew that we might know a whole lot and then again we might not know a thing more than we do now. But I move that we camp right here for the night at least and keep an eye on them. What do you think?"

"Suits me. I've tramped about far enough anyhow," and Jack slipped his pack from his back.

They found a good place where they had a view of the cabin without danger of being seen and there they lay and watched until it began to get dusky in the forest. But they saw no one in all that time.

"They're keeping mighty close whoever they are," Jack said.

"They sure are, but how about supper? I'm getting pretty lank."

"You said a mouthful then and I second the motion. Let's go back to where we crossed that little brook. I guess the water will be fairly cold."

The boys were obliged to eat a cold supper as they were afraid to make a fire for fear that the smoke would be seen by the inmates of the cabin.

"Now I don't think that we had both better go to sleep at the same time," Bob said a little later after had returned to their former place. "One of us had better keep watch. It would be mighty inconvenient to have one of those fellows stumble over us while we were asleep."

"All right. You roll up in your blanket and I'll take the first watch. No use for both of us to stay awake."

"Bob tried to persuade Jack to let him take the first watch but he would not listen to it declaring that he was not a bit sleepy and would not go to sleep even if he tried. So finally he gave in and was soon fast asleep on a bed of leaves a few feet back from where Jack was stationed.

For some time a light showed in the cabin and once or twice the sound of voices came to the boy's ears. But about ten o'clock the light went out and

except for the soft murmur of the tree tops in the light breeze and the occasional hoot of an owl, all was still. There was no moon and Jack could hardly see his hand before his face.

Slowly the time passed. He began to grow sleepy and by eleven o'clock he was having all he could do to keep awake. Swarms of mosquitoes hovered about him but they had had the foresight to bring along a bottle of citronella and they bothered him but little.

"They'd eat a fellow alive if it wasn't for this stuff," he thought as he got to his feet and moved about.

Bob had made him promise that he would call him at twelve o'clock sharp. So, although he hated to disturb his brother, who was sleeping soundly, he gave him a slight shake at the appointed time.

"Twelve o'clock and all's well," he whispered as Bob sat up.

"Anything happend?"

"Not a thing. I believe we might as well go to sleep. I don't believe anything will happen."

"Better be careful than sorry you know. I've had sleep enough. You go to it and I'll keep an eye open."

But in this Bob was mistaken. He had had just sleep enough to make it practically impossible for him to keep awake. He struggled against the desire for an hour or more and then succumbed. Dawn

was breaking through the trees when he awoke. For a moment he wondered where he was and then as memory returned he started up with an exclamation of disgust.

"I'm a good one to keep watch," he told himself. "If Jack finds it out he'll kid the life out of me and serve me right to," he added as he leaned back against the tree.

It was still too dark to see more than a few feet and he waited until the shadows lifted and it was nearly daylight. Then he parted a bush and looked toward the cabin. He rubbed his eyes and looked again. Then he got slowly to his feet and stepped around in front of the bush. The cabin should now be plainly visible but nothing in the shape of a cabin greeted his vision.

"Wonder if I'm seeing things," he muttered. "I mean I wonder if I'm not seeing things that I ought to see," he added.

He moved a little nearer to where the cabin had stood and finally, as nearly as he could judge, he was standing on the exact spot which it had occupied. Not only had the cabin vanished into thin air but he could not find the slightest trace to indicate that a cabin had ever been there.

"It's too many for me," he muttered as he slowly made his way back to where Jack was sleeping.

The boy was sleeping so soundly that Bob was

loath to disturb him, so he made his way to the little stream where he drank and washed his face.

"Perhaps I'll be able to see better now that I've got some of the sleep washed out," he muttered as he started back again.

But if he had hoped that the cabin would put in a reappearance he was doomed to disappointment for there was no cabin there.

"The trouble wasn't with my eyes anyway," he thought as he again retraced his steps.

Jack was awake when he returned.

"Well, how's tricks?" he greeted him.

"Tricks is about right," Bob said as he took his brother by the arm. "Come with me. I want to show you something."

He led the way without another word until they reached the place where the cabin could be seen had it been there.

"Now take a look and tell me if there's a cabin there."

Jack looked and for a moment was silent, then he turned to Bob.

"Mebby you'll believe what I told you about that other cabin now," he grinned.

"But what does it mean?"

"It's mean enough for most anything," Jack replied. "It's a case of now you see it and now you don't."

"With the emphasis on the don't."

"And you didn't hear a thing?"

Bob's face turned red.

"I guess I might as well fess up," he said. "The fact is I went to sleep at the switch so to speak. I don't know how it happened but I was sitting there with my back against a tree and the first thing I knew I didn't know anything. When I woke up it was morning. I'm mighty sorry, but—"

"No apologies are necessary," Jack interrupted. "I came mighty near to doing the same thing and it probably wouldn't have made a bit of difference if you had kept awake. I fancy the old cabin would have vanished just the same."

"That's not the point. It's certainly got me worried to think that I couldn't keep awake. Suppose I'd been on a post in time of war and—"

"And suppose the cow had jumped over the moon," Jack interrupted. "If anything had depended on it you'd have kept awake fast enough. But, Bob, this thing has got me dippy. This is the twentieth century and log cabins aren't in the habit of vanishing into thin air. If this was back in fairy times it wouldn't be surprising but now, well, all I got to say is that it's got me bughouse."

"Bughouse is right," Bob agreed, a serious look on his face. "But what's the answer?"

"Guess we'll have to wait till we get more data,

as Professor Sharp used to say, before we can answer that question."

For more than an hour the two boys searched the immediate vicinity hoping to obtain some clue to the mystery. But their search was all in vain. So far as they were able to discover no one had ever been there before and finally they were obliged to give it up.

"Well, anyhow, I guess we'll be able to build a fire and have a hot breakfast," Bob declared as they slowly made their way back to where they had left their packs.

"I have an idea that there may be trout in that brook," Jack suggested.

"Suppose you build a fire and get the coffee going while I have a try at it."

Jack's idea proved a good one for by the time Bob had the coffee boiling he was back with a dozen speckled beauties averaging about a half a pound. The fish proved a welcome addition to their larder and by the time breakfast was over they were both in better spirits.

"Nothing is so bad but what it might be worse," Bob said as he finished rolling his pack.

"I suppose we might as well keep along the border," Jack suggested.

"I don't know of anything better."

"Even if we find nothing more exciting than log cabins which vanish while you wait," Jack laughed.

They were about to start when a slight sound a little to their right caught Bob's ear.

"Somebody or something is coming this way," he whispered holding up his hand for silence.

"Mebby it's that log cabin," Jack chuckled.

Let's get back in those bushes and hide. It may be someone we wouldn't care to see."

They quickly hid themselves in the thick brush and waited with bated breath.

Soon they could plainly hear something making its way toward them and it was evident that, whatever it was, it would pass close to them. In a moment or two the sound of voices came to them and Bob whispered.

"That sounds very much like Pierre to me."

"His fears were almost immediately realized for, as he carefully parted the bushes in front of his face, he caught sight of the big Frenchman. With him were two other men, both strangers to Bob but Jack at once recognized one of them as the man he had seen twice at the door of the vanishing cabin.

The men stopped short as they caught sight of the smouldering fire.

"They were here only a little while ago," Pierre declared, speaking in French. "They can't be far off and we'll soon have them."

Bob nudged Jack with his elbow as a warning for him to keep perfectly quiet in the hope that the men would fail to locate them. But his hope was quickly dashed to the ground. Big Pierre, as though led by a scent, came straight toward them and in another minute had parted the brush and was looking directly into Bob's eyes. But he quickly saw that he was looking into something else as well, for Bob had him covered with a small but business like looking automatic.

"Were you looking for us?" Bob asked pleasantly as he got to his feet.

For a moment the man hesitated as though at a loss what to say.

"Non. We look for beeg man," he finally managed to say.

"Well, I'm glad that it wasn't we who were putting you to all the trouble. But you made a pretty quick trip to Skowhegan."

"I no gone dar yet. Mebby go ver' queek now."

"I see. Well as long as you were not looking for us we might as well be moving I guess."

Jack had also drawn his revolver and was holding it in his hand although not pointing it at any of the men. They slowly backed away Bob still keeping Pierre covered.

"We'll have to look sharp, Jack," he said in a low

tone. "Those fellows mean trouble and they may follow us. Just as soon as we get out of sight we'll slip behind a couple of trees and see what they're up to."

As long as they were in sight the three men stood still making no motion either to follow them or to go away.

"Now you get behind that tree and I'll take this one," Bob said as soon as he was sure that they were out of sight.

They waited for fully fifteen minutes but there was no sign of pursuit.

"I guess they aren't going to follow us after all," Bob whispered as he stepped from behind the tree and retraced his steps a short distance.

"They seem to have gone," he announced coming back a moment later. "I guess the guns were too many for them."

"For the time being, perhaps, but something tells me that we haven't seen the last of them yet."

"I'm afraid you're right there and we'll keep a mighty sharp watch." Bob agreed as he led the way through the woods.

They made no effort to make time. They were far more desirous of making a thorough search as they went along and not to miss anything which might furnish a clue. Shortly after twelve o'clock they

stopped to eat their dinner by the side of a little stream.

They had finished and were about to start again when suddenly the stillness of the forest was broken by the call of the loon.

"Listen," Bob said as he grabbed Jack's arm. "You'll hear an owl hoot in a minute."

His prediction was made good almost immediately.

"That may be a real owl," Jack declared as the last hoot boomed through the forest, "but if a loon should hear that punk imitation he'd bury his head beneath the waves for shame."

"Just what I thought the other night and, knowing that the loon call is a fake we can be pretty certain that the owl belongs to the same species and anyhow, it's the same 'loon' that I heard the other time."

"I guess that makes it pretty certain that it is a signal."

"No doubt about that and I think it also means that the trail is getting fairly warm."

"If only we had not run up against them," Jack sighed as he leaned back against a friendly spruce.

"I know," Bob sympathized, "but what can't be cured must be endured, you know."

By four o'clock they had covered some five miles from where they had eaten their dinner. Three

times during the afternoon they had heard the signal repeated. For the past two hours Bob had experienced a feeling that they were being followed. Several times, on turning his head, he had fancied that a bush had moved and once he was almost sure that he had caught a glimpse of a form as it dodged behind a tree some distance off to the right. He had said nothing to his brother as yet, but now, as they sat down for a short rest at the foot of a tall pine, he said:

"Jack, I'm pretty certain that we're being shadowed."

"I know it. That is I've thought so for an hour but didn't say anything for fear you'd say I was seeing things again."

"No danger of that," Bob laughed. "Not after seeing that cabin or whatever it was. I'll never accuse you of 'seeing things' again. You can bet your bottom dollar on that."

So far they had seen no evidence of a trail or road leading over the border.

"They must take the stuff across either through the air or else through an underground passage," Jack declared.

"Of course either one is possible especially the former but, you remember, the captain said that no air ship had been seen up here for some months, so it's not very likely."

"Well, of course that's right but I move that we camp for the night pretty soon. To tell the truth I'm rather tired."

"Second the motion just as soon as we come to a spring or a brook."

Fortunately they were not long in finding an ideal place for a camp within a quarter of a mile and Jack declared that he had never seen a more likely brook for trout. And within an hour he had proved his judgment by returning with a full dozen of the largest brook trout Bob had ever seen.

"It's too bad," Bob said a little later as they were washing up their supper dishes by the side of the brook, "but we'll have to stand watch to-night. It wouldn't be safe for both of us to go to sleep at the same time."

Jack readily agreed with him and insisted that he would take the first watch but to this Bob would not hear, declaring that he was not tired and that he knew the other was. After some argument Jack yielded after he had made Bob promise that he would call him promptly on the stroke of twelve.

"I'll have to be careful not to go to sleep on watch this time," Bob thought as he leaned back against the tree.

Jack had been asleep for nearly two hours and not a sound save the call of an occasional night bird and

the distant croaking of a colony of frogs had disturbed the silence of the deep forest.

"Two hours more," he thought as he glanced at his watch. "And I'm having to fight to keep awake now. Guess I'd better move about a bit."

He got slowly to his feet and was about to move toward the brook with the intention of plunging his head into the cold water, when a slight sound off to his left caught his ear. A dead branch cracked as if some man or beast had stepped on it.

He strained his ears for several minutes but the sound was not repeated.

"Probably a deer," he thought as he groped his way toward the little stream.

He had just ducked his face in the water for the second time when he again heard a stick crack this time it was much nearer. He drew his automatic from his pocket and listened. Almost immediately the sound was repeated.

"That's no deer," he muttered as he moved noiselessly to the right.

Automatic in one hand and his flash light in the other he groped his way between the thick trees moving as rapidly as he dared. His idea was to approach the intruder from the side instead of in the direction in which he was moving. In this way he figured that he would stand a better chance of finding out who it was and remain undiscovered himself.

Stopping every few minutes to listen he could hear some heavy object moving through the underbrush a short distance to his left.

"He evidently is in no hurry," he thought as he changed his course slightly toward the sound.

"I believe he's getting farther away," he thought a few moments later as he paused to listen. "Mebby it was only a deer after all."

Two or three times more he heard the cracking but as it was farther away each time he soon decided to make his way back to camp feeling convinced that it was only some wild animal.

It was nearly eleven o'clock by the time he was back.

"Well, it killed an hour anyhow," he thought as he once more sat down at the foot of the big pine.

He was no longer sleepy as the cold water had washed the drowsiness from his eyes. But the time passed very slowly and it seemed to the boy that it must be nearly morning when at last his watch told him that it was time to call his brother.

"I wouldn't do it if he hadn't made me promise," he thought as he rose and went slowly toward the big spruce a few feet to his left where Jack had rolled himself in a blanket.

"It's a shame to wake him," he thought, but a moment later he was standing as if spellbound for there was no Jack there to waken.

CHAPTER VI.

BIG TINY.

"If that don't beat the Dutch," Bob muttered as he threw the light from his flash about him.

There was the blanket at the foot of the tree but the boy had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. Bob was, for the moment, too dazed even to think coherently. That his brother would go off with no word to him when he knew that he was within a few feet was inconceivable. So far as he could see there was no sign of a struggle which would indicate that the boy had been surprised and carried off while he had been absent.

"All the same I'll bet it's the answer," he thought. "Jack would never have gone off like this and not let me know."

Then as the seriousness of the situation struck him his heart seemed to stop beating. If the liquor runners had captured the boy there was no telling what they might do to him. That their presence in

the woods had alarmed the smugglers there was little doubt.

"There must have been two or three of them or he would have put up a fight that would have left some signs," he thought as he hunted around for footprints or other signs of the intruders.

But the ground all about the tree was hard and dry, and covered with the dried needles of the pines, there was little chance of tell-tale footprints disclosing the direction they had taken. Suddenly a thought struck him and a moment later the shrill cry of the whip-poor-will rang through the night.

He knew that if his brother heard that call and if it were possible he would answer and he waited anxiously. But though he repeated the call several times no reply came.

"Either he doesn't hear it or he can't answer," he muttered, "and I rather think it's the latter. He couldn't have gotten very far away in this short time."

To hunt for him in the darkness of the night he knew would be the height of folly so, in spite of his anxiety, he did the only sensible thing. Taking his blanket he went a short distance through the woods and at the foot of a big spruce he rolled it about him, and after a brief but fervent prayer for his missing brother, he closed his eyes. But for a long time sleep refused to come. That his brother

was in the power of ruthless and desperate men he felt certain.

"That fellow who was making the noise must have been acting as a decoy to get me away so that they could sneak up on Jack," he thought. "And I sure fell into their trap beautifully all right."

At last he fell asleep through sheer weariness but he was up as soon as the first glimmer of the coming day began to light up the forest. Almost the first thought which came to him as he got to his feet was that he had one of the pocket radios with him.

"Probably they have searched him and taken his set away from him," he thought as he took the little case from his pocket, "but it won't do any harm to make a try at it."

Time after time he pressed the button sending out the call through the air. But no reply came and after a short time he gave it up. He made short work of breakfast and by the time he had finished it was light enough for him to see plainly. He at once began a thorough search for footprints. For a long time he searched and finally, just as he was about to give up in despair, he found what had escaped his notice in the darkness of the night.

The broken twig would undoubtedly have escaped a less keen vision but old Kernertok, Bob's Indian

friend, had trained him well to read the signs of the forest and but little escaped his eye.

"They're slick all right," he said to himself. "There's no doubt but that they went this way but the big question is, did they leave a trail plain enough for me to follow. Oh, if Kernertok and his dog Sicum were only here. Then there'd be nothing to it."

It was indeed a blind trail which they had left. The faint impression of a footprint here and a broken twig there were all that the boy had to guide him. Many times he lost it only to pick it up again after moments of searching which exasperated him as he felt that every minute was precious.

The trail was leading him almost due north into the wilds of Canada, and the going was getting harder the farther he went. This was to his advantage in a way as the denser the underbrush the plainer was the trail left by the party he was following.

By noon he estimated that he had made about fifteen miles. He ate a hurried lunch by the side of a small stream and before starting off again he sent out call after call with the radio. But he hardly expected results and so was not discouraged when they failed to materialize.

The trail was now fairly well defined owing to the thickness of the growth and he had but little

trouble in following it. Rarely did he lose it and then it was quickly picked up again.

"If only they don't strike a lake and take to a canoe," he thought. "It would be like hunting for a needle in a hay stack if they did."

By four o'clock the trail was leading him up the side of a high mountain densely covered with spruce and pine. As he ascended the underbrush began to get less dense although the trees were still so close together that he was able to follow the trail by the broken twigs.

"Guess they must have gone clear to the top," he panted as, about half way up, he paused for a brief breathing spell.

An hour later he reached the top of the mountain. The trees had been thinning for the last hundred rods and just before he reached the top he saw, through an opening, a small cabin. It closely resembled the one he had seen the day before but was a trifle larger. Smoke was coming from the chimney, proving that the cabin was, or had lately been, occupied.

"Reckon I've got to the end of the trail," he thought as he drew back and concealed himself behind a thick clump of bushes.

The cabin sat in a small clearing. There were no trees within twenty-five or thirty feet in front and on the sides but behind the trees grew so close that

the branches of a big spruce reached over the cabin nearly to its middle.

From where he crouched Bob had a good view of the front of the cabin when he pushed aside a small bush. For nearly an hour he watched without seeing a soul. Then suddenly the door of the cabin was opened and Pierre Harbaugh stepped out followed by two other men. One of them was the man who had been with Pierre, when he had caught him, but the other he had never seen. Of this he was certain for the man once seen would never have been forgotten, for he was a veritable giant. Full six feet and six inches he stood and he must have weighed close to three hundred pounds Bob told himself, and he could see that there was no pound of surplus flesh on his frame.

"They sure grow 'em big up here," he thought as he watched the man fascinated by the gracefulness of his movements. "That man could throw a bull I'll bet and not exert himself much at that. No wonder they got Jack away without a struggle. He would be but a baby in the hands of that fellow."

For some time the three men stood near the cabin door. Bob could see that they were earnestly discussing something but, although he was able to catch a word now and then, he was too far away to get the drift of their conversation. Finally they went back into the cabin and closed the door.

"He's an ugly looking brute though," Bob muttered, and his heart sank as he thought of his brother in the power of such a man.

Jack was dreaming. He thought that he was on his father's farm, just outside the village, helping the farm hands with the haying. He was on the top of a big load of hay when suddenly the rack tilted and went over burying him beneath the load. He struggled to throw aside the hay so that he could breathe but the act became more and more difficult. Finally his struggles woke him and he was conscious of a sweet sickish odor. For a moment he struggled to rise but was unable to move. Thinking that he must still be in the grip of the nightmare he ceased struggling.

"I guess he's gone," he heard a voice say and it seemed that it came from a long distance. Then oblivion.

When Jack's senses returned the first thing he was conscious of was a dull throbbing pain in the back of his head. He was lying at full length on the ground. He tried to sit up but the pain increased to such an extent that he was glad to lie down again. It was so dark that he was unable to see even a few feet but as he lay and tried to reason out what had happened the sound of voices but a few feet distant came to him.

"You no tink you geeve heem too much, hey?" he heard.

"Non, heem be all right, ver' queek," another voice answered.

"We wait till heem can walk?" the first voice asked.

"Non, me carry heem. Heem no heavy for me."

"Oui. Dat best way."

There was the sound of men approaching and an instant later the boy was picked up as easily as though he were a baby. He feigned unconsciousness thinking that he might learn something about the intentions of his captors if they were not aware that he was awake.

The man who had picked him up threw him over his shoulder as though he were a sack of meal and strode off through the thick woods as though he were bearing nothing heavier.

"He must be a giant," Jack thought as he noted the ease with which the man walked.

How they were able to find their way through the darkness of the forest was a mystery to Jack. Not once did they flash a light and seldom did they speak. Their sense of direction was almost uncanny. For fully an hour the man carried Jack not once shifting his weight and from his easy regular breathing the boy could tell that the effort must have been slight.

"I tink dat boy ought wake up," Pierre declared as he stopped in the center of a small clear space. "Mebby you geeve heem too much, huh?"

The giant swung Jack to the ground not ungently and for the first time Pierre flashed the light from an electric torch on his face.

Jack lay perfectly still with closed eyes and tried to breathe as lightly as possible.

"Hees heart she go pat, pat," the giant announced after he had pressed his ear against Jack's breast. "I guess heem all right."

"I put some water on heem," Pierre said as he unscrewed the top of a canteen.

As the warm water trickled onto his forehead the boy thought that it would be the part of wisdom to come to life fearing that if he did not harsher treatment might be resorted to. So he slowly opened his eyes and uttered a low groan. The groan was not entirely faked for his head was still aching as though it would split.

"Where am I?" he asked in a low weak tone.

"You right here," Pierre answered.

"But how did I get here?"

"Big Tiny, heem carry you. You no heavy for Tiny."

"Of all the names," Jack thought, "that takes the cake. Big Tiny. Well I guess by the way he carried me that he's big enough."

"You tink you can walk, huh?"

"I know I can't," Jack snapped. "My head is about ready to break. What did you give me?"

"Never mind. Tiny, heem carry you."

At a word from Pierre, Tiny swung Jack again to his shoulder and they resumed their march. Just as day was breaking they stopped and ate a cold breakfast of bread and jerked meat. Pierre offered the boy a share but his head still ached and a slight sickness at his stomach made the thought of food repugnant and he refused. The Frenchman did not urge it on him and after a short stop they were on their way again, Tiny carrying Jack as before. The man's strength and endurance seemed limitless, but after they had gone a short distance Jack, weary of being jounced about, declared that he thought he **was** now strong enough to walk.

With a grunt of approval the giant swung him to the ground and told him to walk in front of him. The pain in his head had nearly ceased and, although he still felt a bit sick at the stomach, the change from the jolting was a relief.

As often as he dared he reached out a hand and broke off a small branch as he passed beneath a tree. That Bob would endeavor to find him he had not the slightest doubt and he knew that if he succeeded in getting on their trail the broken twigs would serve to guide him. But after he had repeated the

process several times he was forced to give it up. As he was reaching up to grasp a branch just above his head a slap on the side of his head sent him reeling into the trunk of the tree.

"You try dat one time more an' mebbly I keel you," the giant hissed as he regained his balance.

Jack's blood boiled at the blow but he knew that it would be the height of folly to endeavor to retaliate. So he made no reply but he broke off no more twigs.

Jack was about played out when shortly before noon they reached the top of a mountain and he was surprised to see a log cabin built on the highest point.

Pierre threw open the door and motioned for Jack to enter. There was but little in the way of furniture in the single room of the cabin. An old rusty stove, a rough table in the center of the room, four or five more or less broken chairs and three bunks built against one side of the room about completed the inventory.

"Better see if he's got a gun on him, Pierre," suggested the third member of the trio, a small slim man, evidently an American, who, up to now, had taken no part in their conversation.

"Dat bon idea," the Frenchman agreed and proceeded to put it into execution.

He gave a grunt of satisfaction as he pulled the automatic from the boy's pocket and Jack's heart

sank for he had determined to take a stand against them at the first opportunity and he realized that without the gun his chance of getting away was slight indeed unless he had help.

"What you call dis ting?" Pierre demanded as he pulled the battery and case of the radio from his coat pocket.

"That's a telephone?"

"You talk wid heem, oui?"

"No wires here," Jack evaded.

The reply seemed to satisfy the man for, without examining it further, he tossed it onto the table and paid no more attention to it.

Pierre's search was thorough and everything which Jack had in his pockets was taken from him.

"Now you try geet away an' you geet keeled," he declared after he finished going through his pockets.

"But what is the meaning of this? Why have you brought me here?"

"Dat our beesiness. You keep mouth shut."

Just then a faint buzzing sound came from the table.

"What dat?" Tiny asked looking about the room.

"I gess it one beeg blow fly," Pierre replied as he took the lid from the top of the stove and set about starting a fire.

His explanation seemed to satisfy the giant for he apparently paid no more attention to the sound although it continued for some moments. But Jack knew that it was no blow fly. From somewhere off in the distant forest or near at hand Bob was trying to reach him by wireless. How he longed to pick up the instrument and reply. But he dared not make the attempt, and was obliged to let the call go unheeded.

In an incredibly short time Pierre had a substantial if somewhat primitive meal on the table and this time Jack needed no second invitation to eat his full share. As soon as the things were cleared away Pierre beckoned his companions to follow him outside.

"You stay here. No try geet away," he ordered Jack.

Jack's heart sank as he saw the little man pick up his radio phone and thrust it into his pocket before he followed the others from the cabin. As soon as they were all outside he began an examination of the room. It was lighted by three windows, one on either side and one at the back. But they were so small that he doubted his ability to squeeze through one of them even should the opportunity offer. There was no other egress from the room save the door and he knew that he would have no chance of escape that way. So far as he could see the situation was

desperate provided the men meant him harm and of this he had little doubt. The windows were so high up that even by standing on his toes he was unable to see much from them.

His search completed he tiptoed close to the door and pressed his ear against it. He could hear the murmur of voices but was unable to catch even a word. Fully two hours passed before they returned to the cabin and then all but Tiny threw themselves on the bunks and, judging by their heavy breathing, were almost immediately asleep. Once Jack tried to engage his captor in conversation but he shut him up with a snarl and he did not try to repeat the attempt.

Slowly the hours passed. Big Tiny dozed in a chair but roused up every time Jack made the slightest movement and it was clear to the boy that he possessed the knack of sleeping with one eye open.

Jack was a brave boy and it took a great deal to frighten him but as he thought over the situation he admitted to himself that he was scared. He was well aware of the fact that these men would not hesitate to kill him if they felt that their safety depended upon it. He also knew that they were convinced that he and Bob were spies. The best he could hope for unless he succeeded in escaping, he told himself, was that they would hold him as a kind of hostage. He knew that Bob would try to find him

but would he be able to follow their trail through the dense woods and would he be able to effect his escape should he find him? These were the questions which chased through his mind as the hours went slowly by. Two boys pitted against three desperate men made desperate odds indeed.

About six o'clock Pierre crawled out of his bunk and roused the little man. They at once left the cabin and were gone about a half hour. When they returned the little man set about getting supper. Evidently they were in the habit of taking turns at the culinary work, Jack thought, as he watched the man.

"I'd like to know what they're waiting here for," he thought. "But they don't seem at all inclined to tell me. We must be some miles from the border."

It was only a little past eight o'clock when Pierre announced his intention of retiring for the night.

"What you going to do with the kid?" the little man asked. "One of us have to set up and watch him?"

"Non. I feex heem," and going to a small closet at the back of the room Pierre dragged out about twenty feet of light but strong cord.

"I don't see the need of tying me up," Jack protested. "If you fasten the door so I can't get it open there's no way I can escape."

"Mebby so but we tak' no chance," and the man proceeded to make good his statement.

Jack knew that to resist would only make a bad matter worse so he said nothing more but submitted without further protest. As the man bound the cord around his wrists and ankles he tensed his muscles to the greatest possible extent so that, although the man drew it with painful tightness, when he relaxed it loosened to a considerable extent. This accomplished Pierre next bound him securely to the back of the chair in which he was sitting.

"Now I tink mebbly you stay put," he declared as he stood back and surveyed his work.

"I think so myself," Jack agreed, "but these ropes are going to get mighty uncomfortable before morning."

"Oui, I tink so. You keep nose out of our beesiness no geet into trouble. No do so, must tak' what you geet."

"I guess that's fairly good philosophy but not very consoling," the boy thought as Pierre left him and crawled into his bunk.

Jack knew from past experience, for once before he had been tied up in a similar manner, that his position would be extremely painful before morning.

It had begun to get dark before Pierre started to tie him and soon he was unable to see even across the room. He had no way of telling the time but

it seemed to him that several hours must have passed when he heard the call of one whip-poor-will.

"Bob's here," he thought.

Bob's imitation of the bird call was so nearly perfect that probably not one in a hundred would have doubted its genuineness but Jack recognized the slight shade of pitch which his brother always put into the last note.

"If I only dared answer him," he thought and he groaned aloud as he thought of his helplessness.

But it cheered him to know that Bob was near even though he doubted his ability to help him.

Several times the call was repeated and then a few minutes later Jack's heart gave a bound as he heard a faint tapping near the window at the back of the cabin. Eagerly he listened. The sound was so faint that he could barely hear it but in a minute it became plainer. Yes, it was Bob and he was tapping a message in Morse.

"J-A-C-K I-F Y-O-U 'A-R-E H-E-R-E, C-O-U-G-H."

Jack coughed as loudly as he dared.

"C-O-U-G-H O-N-C-E I-F Y-O-U 'A-R-E T-I-E-D."

Jack coughed once.

"O-N-C-E F-O-R Y-E-S; T-W-I-C-E, N-O. C-A-N Y-O-U G-E-T F-R-E-E?"

Jack coughed twice.

"I-S D-O-O-R L-O-C-K-E-D W-I-T-H A B-O-L-T?"

Jack coughed once.

"W-A-I-T."

It seemed to the boy that it was several hours before he heard the tapping again but in reality it was probably not much more than a half hour.

"N-O W-A-Y T-O G-E-T I-N B-U-T D-O-O-R? C-A-N Y-O-U S-L-I-P B-O-L-T?"

Jack coughed twice.

"M-U-S-T C-U-T, W-A-I-T."

It was a long wait for the door was made of inch boards and Bob had nothing but a jack knife with which to work, and as he could only guess at the location of the bolt it was necessary that he cut a hole large enough to admit his hand. Jack could hear him as he cut into the wood bit by bit and his heart beat with hope for he knew that Bob would do it if it could be done.

Then the tapping began again after fully two hours had passed.

"M-O-S-T T-H-R-O-U-G-H. C-O-U-G-H I-F A-N-Y-O-N-E M-O-V-E-S."

Another long wait and then, when it seemed as though he must be nearly done he heard a movement in one of the bunks. Instantly Jack gave a loud cough.

The noise at the door stopped at once and he could

hear one of the men getting out of his bunk. Jack's heart almost stopped beating. What if Bob had the door cut through and the man should see it? The thought sent a shiver down his back. Then a match flared up and an instant later the light of a candle showed him that it was the little man who had awakened.

The man made a thorough examination of his bonds.

"I guess you're all right," he announced in a low tone.

"Can't you loosen them up a bit?"

"Nothing doing."

"All right, but I hope I get a chance to tie you up sometime."

"Mebby you will. Who knows?"

"Can't you tell me what you are intending to do with me?"

"You'll find that out soon enough. What's the matter with that cough of yours?"

"Nothing so far as I know. I thought it was working pretty well," Jack grinned.

"Well, I wish you'd put a muffler on it. I sleep very lightly and the slightest sound disturbs me."

"That's too bad. Sorry I woke you up."

"I'll bet you are," the man sneered as he blew out the candle and went back to his bunk.

For some time Jack could hear him moving about

as if he were restless and could not get to sleep. He was in a cold sweat for fear Bob would begin operations again while he was still awake and thus be discovered. He coughed two or three times hoping that Bob would hear and understand. But after what seemed a long time the man quieted down and soon after he could hear Bob at work.

Bob must have had his work nearly completed when the little man woke up for very soon Jack heard the bolt pushed back and a moment later the hinges of the door creaked slightly as it was pulled open.

"S-s—h," he whispered fearful lest the slight noise would arouse the light sleeper.

Bob made no reply but a moment later Jack could hear him as he groped his way through the darkness across the room.

"Over this way," he whispered.

In another moment Bob was by his side and had cut the cords from his feet.

"Don't make a noise," Jack cautioned in a low whisper. "One of those fellows sleeps like a weasel."

"All right, but let's get out of here as quick as we can."

Jack got up from the chair but sitting in the one position for so long a time had cramped his legs and as he was about to take a step toward the door he stumbled and fell against it and the chair tipped

over making a noise which to the boys sounded like a house falling down as Jack afterward declared. How anyone could get out of a bunk so quickly was always a mystery to the boys, but almost before they could make a move toward the door the room seemed full of men.

Pierre was the first to strike a match and as it flared up Bob made a flying dive for his legs. It was a beautiful tackle and the Frenchman went down in a heap, the match flying from his fingers. Bob was on his feet before Pierre had a chance to grab him.

"All right, Jack," he shouted as he made for where he thought the door was located.

But Jack was too busy just then to answer. When the match, which Pierre had struck, blazed up, the little man had caught a glimpse of him and had made a rush for him. The match went out just before he reached him but he was moving in the right direction and before the boy had time to dodge he had grabbed him. By this time Jack's fighting blood was at red heat, and exerting all his strength, he succeeded in breaking the man's hold and they fell to the floor together with Jack on top. The little man was, however, possessed of remarkable strength despite his size and he quickly rolled over on top of the boy.

Jack heard Bob's shout but at the moment the man had a firm grip on his throat and he could not have

uttered a sound had his life depended on it. Realizing that his strength was rapidly giving out he summoned every ounce he could muster and succeeded in tearing the man's hand away. He was however unable to shake him off and had all he could do to prevent him from renewing his hold.

Meanwhile Big Tiny was stumbling about the room knocking over chairs and trying to get hold of someone. It happened that he ran into Pierre just as the latter was getting to his feet. Instantly he grappled with him and the next moment the two men were rolling over and over on the floor each striving to obtain a strangle hold on the other. Just then Bob, who had bumped into the stove and realized that he had been going in the wrong direction, threw the light from a small electric torch, which he had in his pocket, about the room. Seeing Jack's predicament he sprang to his aid. He caught the man's arm just as it was raised to strike Jack in the face, and with a quick jerk, he pulled him off.

"Jump for the door, Jack," he said and Jack lost no time in scrambling to his feet and obeying.

He reached the door in safety and dashed out into the open never dreaming but that Bob was close behind. Bob was close behind his brother when he reached the door but just as he was about to follow him through a powerful hand seized him and dragged him back into the room.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHASE.

JACK had reached the edge of the woods in front of the cabin before he became aware that Bob was not following him. He stopped and looked back at the building. It was so dark that he was unable to see even its outline. He strained his ears but all was still.

"Now what," he muttered, as he slowly retraced his steps. As he neared the door he could hear the noise of a struggle and he quickened his pace although just what he intended to do he did not know. It was enough that Bob was in the power of their enemies, and at the moment, he had but little thought of what might happen to him.

He had reached the door and was about to pull it open when without warning it opened almost in his face and a figure dashed out nearly knocking him down.

"Come on, Jack. Make it snappy."

It was Bob's voice and the thought that he was

free after all almost overcame him for the moment, but as he hesitated, Bob caught him by the hand and together they raced across the open space. Just as they reached the edge the sharp crack of an automatic came from behind them and Jack heard the bullet strike a tree not more than six inches from his head.

"Duck," Bob shouted.

Ping!

Another ball struck just over Bob's head.

"They've got the range all right," he muttered loudly enough for Jack to hear.

"Lucky they can't see us," Jack said as he ducked beneath the branches of a big pine.

No other shots were fired and after getting some hundred yards into the woods they paused.

"Think they'll follow us?" Jack asked.

"I'll bet they will. For some reason they don't want to lose us."

"Did you bring our packs?"

"I did that but whether we can find them in the dark is another question. We'll have a try at it but for one I don't think it will be healthy for us to linger round here very long. Unless I'm very much mistaken they'll be after us in about two shakes of a dog's tail."

As luck would have it he stumbled onto the packs just as he spoke.

"Here's luck," he cried. "Now let's beat it."

"Listen."

"They're coming after us, but if we can't keep out of their hands in this darkness we deserve to be caught. But we want to be mighty careful not to get separated," Bob cautioned as he started off toward the south.

Although the forest was, at this point, fairly free of underbrush, the trees grew very close together, and in the intense darkness, their progress was slow.

"It'll hinder them more than it will us," Bob chuckled as he dodged just in time to avoid hitting a big spruce.

"Look! They're just over to the right," Jack whispered as he saw a flash of light through the trees.

"Then we'd better bear a little to the left," Bob advised as he slightly changed his course.

"They're getting pretty close," he declared a few minutes later as he heard the sound of the pursuit seemingly but a few yards behind him. "Guess we better go into high."

At the risk of banging full tilt into the trees they increased their pace, and after a short time were rejoiced to note that the sounds of the chase were growing fainter and soon they died out altogether.

"Guess they've either given it up or have taken

the wrong direction," Bob said as he paused for a moment.

"You mean the right direction for us," Jack corrected.

"You win," Bob laughed, "but we better keep a going for a while longer before we slack up. The greater the distance we put between them and us the safer I'll feel."

For another hour or more they kept up as rapid a pace as was possible and then Bob called a halt, and after listening for a moment he expressed the opinion that, for the time at least, they were safe.

"I guess we've shaken them off all right."

"Looks like it," Jack agreed. "I reckon I can stand a few minutes' rest. How about you?"

"You said it, boy. I'm dead tired."

They threw off their packs and dropped to the ground. Eagerly they compared notes telling each other all that had happened since they had parted.

"But why didn't you come out of that cabin when I did?" Jack asked as Bob finished telling what a time he had in cutting through the door.

"For the same reason the Paddy didn't ride the mule," Bob laughed. "I couldn't. You see, just as I reached the door someone grabbed me and jerked me back. And say, boy, that fellow must be stronger than Sampson himself, the way he dragged

me back into that room was a caution. I thought he'd snap my head off.

"That must have been Tiny."

"Tiny! Tiny who or what?"

"Just Tiny. I believe though that Pierre did refer to him once as Big Tiny. He's only about seven feet tall and I don't believe he weighs a pound over four hundred. Oh, he's a real cunning little fellow; as playful as a kitten. But how in the world did you get away?"

Bob laughed.

"It was the funniest thing while it lasted. You see, he had me by the collar and I turned my head just enough to bring his arm against my mouth. And I bit him. Yes, I did. The way I set my teeth into that arm was a caution. But I was good and mad, and when I get just that mad, well, you know me."

"I'll say I do. But go on."

"Well, he ripped out an oath and drew back his right arm. I felt the blow coming rather than saw it. It was too dark to see. Anyhow I dodged just in time and Pierre, who was right behind me caught it exactly on the end of his nose. Mad? I never saw, or rather heard a man so mad in my life. He jumped for the other fellow and I ducked. Pierre is no slouch when it comes to a rough and tumble and the way they went at it would have made a

champion look like a plugged thirty cent piece. I don't know who won out. I didn't wait to see. I had business elsewhere?"

"But where was the little guy all this time?"

"I don't know. Guess he was busy keeping out of the way."

"Mebby, but take it from me, he's some scrapper himself. I thought he was going to choke me to death before I could get his hand away. He may be small but he's all there what there is of him. By the way, who do you suppose he is? He's not French nor a half-breed and he talks like an educated man.

"Did you hear either of the others call him by name?"

"No."

"Did he act as though he were the boss?"

"I wouldn't say so. In fact he didn't have much to say. Seemed like one of those quiet kind. But you never can tell."

" 'Still waters run deep,' hey?"

"Something like that. At least that's the way it struck me."

"Suppose he's the brains of the gang?"

"Hard to tell, but I hardly think so. Pierre and Tiny didn't seem to pay very much attention to him."

"That may have been a plant."

"Mebby."

"Anyway it's a cinch that neither Pierre or that there Tiny, as you call him, is the leader. There's someone with more brains behind all this. It takes brains and a lot of them to outwit Uncle Sam as long as this gang have done it, and I don't believe either of those fellows can qualify."

"I believe you. They run more to muscle than to grey matter. But some of these half-breeds are pretty shrewd at that."

"Cunning rather. They know the woods but when it comes to planning out things like this it takes the brain of a white man, and, mark my word, when the puzzle is solved, you'll find that an American of education is the power behind the throne."

"I don't doubt it," Jack agreed. "But what's the next move?"

"I don't think we can do better than stay right here till it gets light enough to see. Then I reckon we'll have to go back to the camp and stock up on grub. I lost two or three packages on the way up here and the larder is pretty low. By the way, I wonder why that cabin didn't disappear. It didn't live up to its reputation."

"Guess we didn't give it time. If we went back there now I'll bet a cent we'd find it gone."

"Perhaps. But we'll take your word for it, that is, for the time being."

"The one thing which I regret more than anything

else about this expedition so far is that they've got my radio set," Jack mourned.

"You needn't shed any tears about that because I've got it in my pocket," Bob assured him.

"Do you mean it?"

"Sure do. You see when I first got in the cabin the first thing I bumped into was the table and my hand struck it as I ran it over the surface. I knew what it was the minute I felt it so, of course, I shoved it into my pocket."

"Good boy. They're welcome to the revolver and the rest of the things I had with me just so they haven't got that set."

By this time the first hint of the coming dawn made itself evident and in a short time it was light enough for them to see for some distance. Bob discovered a small spring of icy cold water bubbling up by the side of a rock and there they ate their scanty breakfast of bread and crackers washing it down with the clear cold water. They had a small supply of bacon left but did not dare to build a fire for fear the smoke would betray them.

"How far do you suppose we are from the camp?" Jack asked as they were on the point of starting off again."

"Pretty hard to say, but it must be all of twenty miles or more. We'll have all we want to do to make it by night."

"I wish we didn't have to go back. It seems like such a waste of time."

"I know, but we have to eat. If I hadn't lost part of the stuff we could have made out for a couple of days longer but, as it is, I'm afraid it's the only thing to do."

"I suppose so but it seems to me that so far this expedition has not been what you would call a howling success. We really know just about as much as before we started."

"We must have patience," Bob counseled. We can't expect to solve, in a day, a case that has baffled the captain for weeks."

"Hark! Someone's coming," Jack grabbed his brother by the arm.

"And they're close on us. Quick follow me. It's our only chance."

As he spoke he caught hold of a branch of a big spruce and quickly pulled himself up closely followed by Jack. They had hardly ascended half way to the top when they heard voices directly beneath them. So thick were the branches below that they were unable to see them but they had no trouble in recognizing Pierre and the man called Tiny. Whether or not the little man was with them they could not tell for, if he was, he did none of the talking.

The two men were speaking French, but although they talked rapidly and in low tones the boys had

little difficulty in following the drift of the conversation. Pierre was insisting that they were on the right trail to catch them while Tiny argued that they were too far toward the east, maintaining that they would take the shortest way back to the camp. The former won the argument when he discovered a few crumbs of bread by the side of the spring, and Tiny acknowledged that he was right.

The boys, hiding in the branches of the tree hardly dared breathe for fear that the sharp ears of the men below would hear them. But the men never suspected that their quarry was directly over their heads and after a little more talk they started off.

The boys waited a full half hour before they deemed it safe to return to the ground.

"They might take a notion to come back and we'd better play it safe," Bob advised and Jack agreed.

"It seems funny that they didn't notice that our trail ends here." Jack whispered.

"I was afraid of that but it's pretty hard to follow a trail through these woods without a dog as I found out yesterday and I'm inclined to think that they just happened to stumble on us here."

"I dare say you're right," Jack agreed. "But I wish they had said something to give us an idea which way they're going."

"Oh, they'll make for the camp as fast as they can go hoping to catch us before we get there, and

all we've got to do is to trail along behind and be careful not to catch up with them."

"I guess it won't be very hard not to do that last," Jack declared as they made their way to the ground.

"According to your friend, Tiny, we've come a little too far to the east so I guess we'd better bear a bit toward the west," Bob said when they were once more on the earth.

Until nearly noon they trudged on without stopping. Then, coming to a small brook, they decided to pause for an hour's rest and to eat their dinner. Jack succeeded in catching half a dozen trout, and risking a small fire, they fried them with the last of their bacon.

"There, we're cleaned out," Jack declared as the last morsel slipped down his throat.

Shortly after four o'clock, as good luck would have it, they struck the lake and an hour later were back at the camp. They went to bed shortly after eating their supper both being thoroughly tired out with their long tramp.

None of the three men showed up at the camp that night or the following day, a fact which rather surprised them.

"We'll wait over to-morrow which is Sunday and get an early start Monday morning," Bob planned as they were eating breakfast. "If we started right

off the proprietor here might suspect something. Not that I think he is mixed up in the business but you never can tell and the only safe bet is to suspect everyone till you know he is innocent."

They thoroughly enjoyed the two days' rest and early Monday morning, well supplied with provisions, they again hit the trail. The first day out they made rapid progress since they were not obliged to look for signs, and by ten o'clock they reached the spot where they had spent the night on their former trip. Bob half expected to see the mysterious cabin as they approached the place but there was no sign of it.

"Guess it don't appear twice in the same place," he said.

"What don't?"

"That cabin with wings."

Jack laughed. "I guess you were thinking about the same as I was. I was rather hoping that the cabin would be here."

"Same here. But it isn't. And now we must go slowly again and be sure not to miss anything."

" 'Slow but sure,' as the old lady said when she shooed the hen out of her garden," Jack laughed.

"But I move we eat before we start out," Bob said as he threw off his pack.

"This Maine air sure does give you an appetite."

"You said it," Jack agreed.

"I'd give a cent to know whether or not that little guy was with the other two when they had us treed," Bob mused between bites.

"Why? What difference does it make?"

"To my way of thinking it makes just this difference. If he was there he didn't say a word and that would indicate that he didn't amount to much. But if he wasn't there it looks as though he had sent them after us while he went some other way. That way of looking at it he may be the big gun after all."

"A la Sherlock Holmes," Jack laughed. "But your deducting listens pretty good at that."

"The more I think about it the more I'm convinced that he's the boss. It don't seem reasonable that a man such as you described would be mixed up in this sort of thing in any role except the leading part. Can you imagine an American taking orders from a couple of breeds?"

"Does sound kinder fishy but I've known some white men to get pretty low and so have you."

"That's true too, but just the same I've got a hunch."

"Well, here's hoping that we'll find out some time."

It took a long time before they could find the next stone which marked the boundary line and when they camped for the night Bob reckoned that they

had not made more than five or six miles from where they had eaten dinner. Not a trace of a clue had they discovered and both were a trifle discouraged as they ate their supper.

"Think there's any need of keeping watch to-night?" Jack asked after he had finished washing the dishes.

"What do you think about it?"

"Unless someone's been following us I don't believe there's any need, and if those fellows are on our trail I don't think they would have waited this long to nab us."

"Well, let's see if we can find a good thick place where no one will be likely to step on us and we'll take a chance."

They were not long in finding a place in a thick clump of bushes where one could pass within a foot or two of them and never suspect their presence, and by eight o'clock they were rolled side by side in their blankets.

Jack was almost asleep when the call of a whip-poor-will brought him wide awake.

"Did you hear it?" he asked.

"Hear what?"

"That whip-poor-will."

"No. Guess I must have been asleep."

Just then the call came again, "whip-poor-will."

"That's a genuine bird if I'm any judge," Bob declared. "Listen and see if an owl answers."

They listened while the call was repeated several times but the owl was silent.

"I guess Will got his licking this time all right," Bob said as he turned over. "If that was a man he was a good deal better imitator than the other fellow."

The night passed without incident and both boys were up with the sun much refreshed and in much better spirits.

"Funny how much rosier things look in the morning," Jack remarked as he touched a match to the little pile of birch bark which he had gathered to start their fire.

"Sure does and I can feel it in my bones that we're going to strike something to-day," Bob replied.

"If it don't hit us first," Jack laughed.

"Why do you suppose Pierre didn't show up at the camp?"

"Ask me something easy. Perhaps he was afraid we'd get a line on him."

"Hardly that. More likely he had an appointment to meet that white man and didn't have time to go clear to the camp and get to him on time."

"Sounds reasonable."

"Thanks."

"Don't mention it."

By six o'clock they were ready to start. Their way led due west and over a long range of mountains.

"We've got some climb ahead of us," Jack declared, as an hour later they came to the foot of the range.

"Well, it won't be the first time we've climbed a mountain and I hope it won't be the last."

"I don't believe we need to hunt for signs very much going up here. They wouldn't be apt to take it across over a mountain," Jack said as they began the ascent.

"You forget that with these fellows the most unlikely place is the most likely place. If they took it across where anyone would suspect they'd have been caught long ago. The fact that they haven't been is because they've been taking it across some place so unlikely that no one has looked there."

"My, but it's a great thing to have brains," Jack declared as Bob paused.

"Sure is. The trouble is a good many people have them but don't use them."

So as they went up the mountain they looked even more carefully for signs if that were possible. As they approached the top the trees began to thin out and the going became easier.

They were almost up when suddenly Bob, who was

a few feet ahead, dodged behind a tree and held up his hand for Jack to do the same.

"What's up?" the latter whispered.

"There's a man on the top of the mountain just a little way ahead of us."

"Did you see him?"

"Sure did."

"What did he look like?"

"I didn't see him plainly enough to tell but follow me carefully and we'll soon know."

Dropping to their hands and knees they crept on up the mountain keeping behind the trees so far as possible.

"We'll wait here a bit and I think we'll see him in a minute," Bob said, as he stretched himself at full length behind a thick bush.

He found that by parting the bushes slightly he had a fair view of the summit which, for a large space, was entirely devoid of trees. No one was in sight at first but after waiting a few minutes he saw a man emerge from a small clump of trees a little to one side of the clearing.

"Take a peep at that fellow and see if you know him," Bob said as he drew back and let Jack take his place.

"He's the little fellow who was with Pierre and Tiny," Jack announced a moment later as he drew back.

"I thought as much. Now we'll watch and see what he's up to."

Bob resumed his former position and kept his eyes on the man. He was standing on the highest peak of the range on a huge rock which raised itself ten feet or more from the earth. Evidently he was watching for a signal of some kind for he shaded his eyes as he scanned the lower regions on all sides. For nearly a half hour he stood there like a statue save for the slight movement of his head as he slowly turned it. Then, suddenly, as if he had found that for which he was looking, he jumped to the ground and quickly kindled a small fire at the base of the rock. When it was burning brightly he threw on some damp leaves causing a dense cloud of smoke to arise. This he smothered with a small blanket for an instant. Then he drew the blanket aside allowing a puff of the smoke to ascent like a toy balloon.

"He's signaling someone Indian fashion," Bob whispered.

"Guess your hunch is working," Jack whispered back.

"Wouldn't wonder. Now if we could only see if he gets and answer and where it comes from we might learn something that would help."

But from where they lay they could see none of

the surrounding country and they did not dare to move from their position.

"It's a cinch that it's somewhere round here that they bring the stuff over anyhow. We've learned that much if nothing more," Bob declared.

"No doubt about that," Jack agreed.

The man continued to signal for fifteen or twenty minutes but whether or not he received an answer the boys could only guess. Finally, however, he seemed to be satisfied and after carefully extinguishing the fire he started off down the opposite side of the mountain.

CHAPTER VIII.

BIG MOSQUITOES.

"I TOLD you that fellow was the boss of the gang," Bob declared after the little man had disappeared from his sight.

"Well, didn't say he wasn't did I?"

"No. But I think you thought I was wrong."

"But he seemed to have so little to say."

"Oh, he's a deep one all right if he is the leader."

"I'll say he is."

"What do you think we'd better do now?"

"You say. You're the head of this expedition."

"There's no head to it," Bob retorted. "You have just as much say as I do."

"I know it, dear boy, but I know that your judgment is better than mine."

"Thanks, old man," and Bob gave his brother's hand a hearty squeeze. "Now I'd like mighty well to know where that fellow is going and who he's going to meet but it'll be terribly risky to follow him. I tell you he's a keen one and if either or both

of us ever get into his hands again it'll go hard with us and we won't get away so easily."

"Mebby you call the last time easy but I thought it was pretty strenuous myself."

"I mean comparatively. It was hard enough while it lasted."

"I'll say it was."

"Well, what do you say? Shall we take the risk and follow him?"

"Why of course," Jack replied quickly as though there were no other course. "That's what we are here for, isn't it?"

"Good boy. I thought you'd say that. Now, Jack, I really think that this is the most serious thing we've ever been up against and we've simply got to be careful and take no unnecessary chances. We must not get caught. But we'd better get started or he'll get so far away that we'll lose him. We've got to skirt the top here and keep in the woods. It would never do to show ourselves on that open space."

"Think we'll be able to trail him?"

"I hope so but it'll be no cinch. I wish Kernertok was here. He could do it easily but I reckon it'll take all our knowledge of woodcraft."

"But you managed to follow us the other day all right."

"I know but four leave more of a trail than one and those branches you broke off helped a lot."

"Only trouble was Tiny caught me at it and gave me a cuff side the head that made me see stars and I didn't dare try it again."

While they were talking they had been going rapidly through the woods and now were on the other side of the peak where the man had disappeared.

"He went down just about here," Bob said. "I noticed that he went just to the right of this spruce."

"But he was mighty careful to leave no trail so far as I can see," Jack declared.

"I expected that. This ground doesn't leave much of an impression and we'll have to do some hunting."

For some time they searched and at last Jack found a foot mark a short distance down the mountain.

"That shows that he probably went straight down," Bob declared as he examined the mark.

But search as they might they could find no other trace.

"Guess we'll have to go it blind for a while at least and trust to luck," Bob said. "If we wait much longer he'll have so long a start that we'll never find him. We'll go straight on down and keep our eyes peeled for clues."

But it was not until they reached the foot of the range that they found another clue. Then Jack called

his brother's attention to a broken twig on a small bush.

"It's a sure thing that that was broken not much over an hour ago. See, it is still wet with sap," he said as he felt of the broken place.

"Your right," Bob agreed. "It sure was careless in him but a lucky thing for us. We're on the right track so far at least. Now where do we go from here?"

"It's six to one and half a dozen to the other, I guess unless we can find another mark."

"Which we've simply got to do. It was a fairly sure thing that he came directly down the mountain but where he went from here is another thing."

Luckily, a few minutes later Jack found another broken twig and Bob was emphatic in his praise.

"That gives us a pretty good idea of the direction he took and it's fair to believe that he'll keep in a straight line. Now the question is whether or not we can do the same."

To keep a straight course through the trackless forest requires a degree of skill which few men possess. But the boys had learned the art from long training under their Indian tutor who was an adept. So it was with considerable confidence that they struck off. To their great satisfaction they found signs from time to time which showed them that they were on the right track. A broken twig here

and the faint print of a foot there where a damp spot had retained the impression, were clues which were unmistakable to the trained eyes of the boys.

"He stopped here to get a drink," Bob declared about three o'clock as he pointed to a small spring at the foot of a big pine. "See, here's where he kneeled down."

"Can you tell anything about how long ago he was here?"

Bob knelt down and examined the marks closely.

"It's pretty hard for me to judge, but from the way the leaves are pressed together, I should say that it wasn't much over an hour ago. It's not very damp right here and they ought to loosen up in a little more than that length of time. That's according to Kernertok and you know what he says about such things is usually correct."

"I'll say it is. Then, if that's right, we must be gaining on him a little."

"I think we are and we want to keep our eyes peeled because he may be nearer than we think. And believe me we want to see him first."

By five o'clock Bob calculated that they had made nearly fifteen miles since they had been trailing the little man.

"I'd sure like to know whether or not he's going to reach where he's going to to-night," Bob said as he leaned against a tree and wiped his face.

"That last statement was a trifle involved but I think I get your meaning. Sorry I can't give you the answer."

"So am I. Are you tired?"

"Well, I'm not exactly what you'd call rested but I guess I can keep going awhile longer."

"Well we'll camp as soon as we come to a brook or spring."

It was about a half hour later when Jack, who was some feet in the lead, held up his hand in warning. Bob stopped and in a moment Jack had come back to where he was waiting.

"What did you see?" Bob asked anxiously.

"Another one of those vanishing cabins, that is it looked just like the others."

"See any body?"

"Not a soul, but there's smoke coming out of the chimney."

"Then there's some one there of course."

"That was what I meant to imply."

"Well, I guess it means that we've got to the end of our journey for to-night and it also means that we'll have to eat a cold supper."

"That's it. Say something cheerful and then spoil it all. But I say, Bob, I'm going to keep an eye glued to that cabin and if it vanishes I'm going to see it go."

"All right. Hope you succeed. But let's look

around and find a good place to camp. We don't want to be too near and then again we don't want to get so far away that you won't be able to see it when it goes up."

"So you think it goes up, eh?"

"Up or down, take your choice. I guess one's about as likely as the other."

They had been talking in subdued tones and now they adopted Bob's suggestion and began to look for a good place to spend the night. They found it after a search of a few minutes. About two hundred feet back in the woods from where Jack had seen the cabin was a thick clump of bushes nearly round and some twenty feet in diameter. Bob forced his way into them and in the center was an open space small to be sure but plenty large enough for them to stretch out at full length.

"I'll bet we could stay there a month and never be seen," he told Jack as he emerged.

It was, as Jack said, rather a dry supper they had that night but both agreed that it would not be safe to build a fire.

"I say, Bob, do you suppose they raise any bigger mosquitoes anywhere in the world than these are?" and Jack gave his face a slap.

Bob laughed.

"They're pretty good sized but a fellow was telling me a few weeks ago about some that he saw up

at Moxie Lake. He said that the proprietor of a camp there had six of them trained to ring the dinner bell. It seems that the bell was worked by a rope and at exactly meal time they would all light on the rope and their weight would pull it down. Then when it was down they would fly off and let it swing back again."

"Some mosquitoes," Jack laughed, "but I'll bet it wouldn't take more than three of these fellows to ring that bell. Lucky we brought along some citronella. And here goes for an application."

"How about standing guard to-night, Bob?" he asked a few minutes later.

"How about that eye you were going to keep on the cabin?"

"That's so. But there's no need of both of us watching at the same time, and to-night I'm going to take first trick."

"Yes and then when I come to look for you you'll be gone."

"Well, I reckon I've got a pair of lungs, and judging from past experience, I'm safer awake than asleep."

"There may be something in that," Bob agreed slowly as though he had something on his mind. "All right, you take the first watch and call me at twelve, or sooner if you get sleepy."

"Wouldn't wonder if we had rain before morn-

ing," Jack declared a few minutes later as he glanced up at the sky which had become overcast.

"Looks like it. If it does rain before twelve you'd better crawl in and let the old cabin disappear by its lonesome."

It was nearly eight o'clock when Jack, having located a position where he could command a fair view of the cabin without danger of being seen, settled down to his long vigil. Soon it was so dark in the forest that he could see little more than the outline of the cabin and by the time an hour had passed even that had faded. Then soon after it began to rain, gently at first and then harder until it had settled to a steady downpour.

"Guess I might as well give it up," he thought. "I can't see a thing and it's a cinch that if there's anyone in that cabin they'll stay there and not be prowling about the woods."

He had seen no light in the cabin but he knew that that was no indication that there was no one there. Men go to bed early in the big woods unless they have business to keep them up and it would be nothing unusual for them to go before it was dark enough for a light.

It took considerable groping about before he was able to locate the place where Bob was sleeping. He had a flashlight with him but did not dare use it for

fear that the light might be seen by some one in the cabin.

"We're taking no chances this time," he muttered as he searched.

He was pretty wet by the time he had located the clump of bushes, but fortunately the night was warm and he did not mind it. Bob was curled up beneath a thin rubber blanket which was large enough to cover them both, and in another minute he was sharing it with him without having disturbed him.

Bob awoke promptly at twelve o'clock, having set his mental alarm clock, as Jack called it, for that time.

"Hope Jack had sense enough to come in," he thought as he heard the rain. "Good boy," he added as he heard his deep breathing.

The rain was still falling when they awoke the next morning and there was no indication that it would clear soon.

"Cheerful, isn't it?" Bob grinned.

"Oh, well, it might be worse," Jack replied struggling to pull on a soggy shoe. "Think we dare risk a bit of a fire for breakfast?"

"Hardly, and I doubt if we could find anything dry enough even if we did dare."

"All right. You're the doctor, but some hot coffee sure would hit the right spot about now."

Breakfast was, as Jack put it, a rank failure so far as any enjoyment of the meal was concerned.

[The rain had settled into a slight drizzle, just enough to keep them damp without being actually wet.

"I'm going to take a squint at the cabin," Jack announced as soon as he had finished eating.

"Bet it's gone," Bob ventured.

"I'd want too big odds to take that bet."

"Well, hurry back and make your report."

He was back in less than five minutes.

"You lose," he announced.

"You mean the cabin's still there?"

"Right the first time."

"Looks like it don't vanish in rainy weather."

"It didn't this time, anyhow."

"See anybody?"

"Not a soul and there was no smoke."

"Kinder looks as though they left in the night."

"Or else there was no one there when we got here."

"But we saw their smoke last night."

"I know, but they might have gone off and left a fire in the stove."

"Possible, but unlikely."

"Well, I suppose the only thing to do is to watch until we're sure."

"I guess."

They took up their position behind the bush which sheltered them from the rain to a slight extent and waited.

"'Rain before seven, clear off before eleven,' " Jack whispered. "But it don't look much like it," he added glancing up at the sky.

"The wind's changing though. It was in the east till a few minutes ago and now it's nearly south. If it keeps on till it gets into the northwest it'll probably break."

"Here's hoping."

An hour passed. No sign of life in or about the cabin was visible. The rain had, however, stopped and the wind was blowing strongly from the west.

"Sun'll be out in less than an hour," Bob promised.

"Can't come too soon to suit me."

Another half hour went by.

Bob was about to propose that they creep up and risk a peep in at the window when suddenly the door of the cabin opened and a man stepped out. He stood for a moment looking up at the sky as though speculating on the weather. He was a short thick set man, evidently a half-breed, and so far as Bob could remember, a man whom he had never seen.

"Take a peep and see if you can place that fellow," he whispered to Jack as he drew back his head.

"Never saw him before," Jack declared after he had studied the face.

"Evidently a new actor on the scene, at least so far as we're concerned," Bob whispered.

"And the plot thickens."

"It's so thick now that it won't run," Bob smiled.

When he looked again the man had disappeared and the door of the cabin was closed.

"Well, one thing's settled. There's someone there all right, and there's no knowing how many others," he whispered.

"And there comes the old sun," Jack exulted as the rays broke through the clouds.

Two more hours, which seemed as Jack declared, like so many weeks, passed without any other sign of life about the cabin. Then came from far off in the deep forest the call of the whip-poor-will.

"That's their signal," Jack whispered. "Wait a minute and you'll hear the answer."

Almost at once the door opened and this time the little man whom they had trailed the day before stepped out followed by the thick set stranger. The former gave the hoot of an owl and a moment later the signal was answered by the whip-poor-will.

"He's getting that bird down a bit better. Guess he's had his whistle tuned. If I hadn't heard it before I'd let it pass for the real thing," Jack declared after the men had returned to the cabin.

"I wonder why they seem so scared of showing themselves."

"I was thinking that very thing myself," Bob replied. "I doubt if there is a human being except us

and their crowd within twenty miles of here. Still they may know a lot that we don't."

"We'd better be getting back to our den. Whoever it was that signaled is probably coming here, and judging from the sound, we'll be just about in his path."

They had been back in the midst of the clump of bushes where they had passed the night only a little more than a half hour when they heard voices off to their left and a few minutes later three men passed so close to them that they could almost have touched them.

"Wonder if we'd know any of the newcomers," Jack whispered as soon as they had passed.

"I didn't dare to take a peep, they were so close."

"Well mebbey we'll see them later."

They waited another half hour and then crept up to their spying place. Bob parted the bushes carefully and the next moment drew back with an exclamation of surprise.

"Gone, eh?"

"Clean's a whistle."

"Can you beat it?"

For a moment neither spoke again then Jack said:

"I never believed in spooks but if this thing isn't spooky then I'll eat my hat."

"It does seem spooky that's a fact," Bob returned soberly. "But you know there's no such thing, not

in the twentieth century, and there's an explanation to it if we can only find the key."

"But for a full grown log cabin to vanish into thin air right before your eyes so to speak. Don't tell me it isn't spooky. Why they used to hang folks for less than that."

"Hold on there, son. Your getting your figures of speech mixed. They never used to hang log cabins."

"Mebby not. But log cabins didn't used to vanish like that either," and Jack passed his hand over his eyes as though he were dazed.

"We shouldn't have let it out of our sight for a minute," Bob mused. "But always before it has gone in the night."

"Night or day doesn't seem to make much difference to that bird," Jack declared.

"Well we might as well go and view the remains, that is provided there are any to view."

"Better wait a bit. They haven't had time to get very far away yet and there's a chance of one of them coming back for something. A few minutes more or less won't make any difference to us and it might save us from getting caught."

So, for another half hour they waited but nothing happened and at last Bob declared that he thought it safe to investigate. But, as he more than half expected there was absolutely nothing to investigate.

"You said a mouth full when you said clean as a whistle," Jack declared as they stood on the very spot where the cabin had been. "They don't leave as much as a toe nail behind them."

Jack was quite correct in his assertion for there was not a particle of evidence to show that a cabin or any other sort of a house had ever occupied the place.

"Well, what's the answer?"

For several moments Bob made no reply. He was thinking and Jack was wise enough not to interrupt him.

"One thing seems fairly certain," he volunteered finally.

"That's better than nothing. What is it?"

"Why, it must be that we are somewhere near where they do business, else there wouldn't be so many of them round."

"Sounds reasonable. And then what?"

"I guess dinner's about the next thing. How does it strike you?"

"Right where I live."

After a short search they found a spring a short distance away and for the first time in over twenty-four hours they ventured to build a small fire using such bits of wood as would make the least smoke.

"Jack, I hardly like to do it but I'm going to ask you to stay right here and let me do a bit of scout-

ing by my lonesome," Bob said as soon as they had eaten.

"Why alone?"

"Simply because one stands less risk of getting caught than two."

"Well I can't say I like the idea much but what you say goes."

"I'll be back before dark if nothing happens," Bob promised as he started off.

Beyond the place where the cabin had stood the trees grew far apart and there was no underbrush, making traveling easy but leaving no traces. Thus he was unable to find any signs of anyone having passed. This did not discourage him as he hardly expected it. He made rapid time relying on his keen hearing to tell him should he overtake the men he was trailing. He was not sure by any means that he was going in the right direction but he was taking a chance on keeping near the border line. He calculated that he had made nearly ten miles when the forest began to be more dense. Tall spruces and straight pines grew closely together and there was now considerable underbrush making it necessary for him to slow up.

This, however, did not worry him as he reasoned that, if he had to go slowly, so would the men in front of him, that is, if they were in front.

"I ought to be pretty near up to them by this

time," he told himself as he stopped to listen a little later, "that is provided I'm on the right track."

Several times during the last half hour he had seen marks which told him that someone had passed that way not long before but he could not be sure that it was his party. But the signs had encouraged him to keep on and suddenly he heard the sound of voices just a short distance ahead. He stopped to listen. From the sound several men were talking although he was not near enough to catch any words.

"Sounds as though they were having a dispute about something," he thought as he softly crept nearer.

It was evident that the party ahead had stopped, perhaps for the night, and he hoped to get near enough to be able to hear what they were talking about. He had taken about ten steps when he heard a loud snap and something gripped him firmly by the leg. He knew only too well what it was. He was caught in a bear trap, probably set by some trapper and either lost or forgotten.

Fortunately his stout legging furnished considerable protection and he was quite certain that it had not broken the bone. But it hurt so that for a moment he nearly fainted. But he resisted the giddiness with all his strength and soon the pain became less.

"I'm in a pretty pickle," he thought, "unless I can spring it open."

Before trying, however, he listened a moment. He could still hear the men talking but now their voices were growing fainter and he judged that they had started on again. For a moment he hesitated whether or not to call and take his chances of getting away from the latter. But his knowledge of their character quickly decided him. "Better take a chance with the trap than with them," he thought.

He waited until he could no longer hear them and then reaching down he seized the jaws of the trap, one in each hand and, exerting all his strength, tried to force them apart. But to his dismay he was unable to so much as move them. A bear trap is made to hold once it has caught its prey, and his heart sank as he realized his inability to extricate himself.

"If I had only taken Jack with me he moaned," as he sank down on the ground.

For a few minutes he rested. The leg did not pain so much now, only a dull ache. He knew that the jaws were shutting off the flow of blood. After a bit he felt stronger and renewed his efforts but they were in vain. Then he looked about to see if the trap was fastened and found that it was locked by a strong chain to a nearby tree.

"No chance of dragging it," he thought.

"Again he rested and thought. Miles away from anyone except his enemies and even they were doubt-

less out of hearing by this time, and night coming on, he realized that his position was most serious. Glancing down at the jaws he saw that blood was beginning to soak through the legging. It was, however, not bleeding fast enough to cause him any anxiety on that score.

"Guess I'd better keep as still as I can, though," he thought. "The more I wiggle round the deeper those jaws will bite and first thing I know I'll be bleeding to death."

Dusk was beginning to fall and he knew that in a short time darkness would be upon him. He thought of Jack back there anxiously awaiting his return and wondered what he would do when he failed to show up.

CHAPTER IX.

THE POCKET RADIO SAVES BOB'S LIFE.

BOB fully realized that he was in a bad fix but it was not until darkness came that the thought occurred to him that he might not get out of the scrape alive. He had been in tight places before but never had he felt so entirely helpless and alone. To make matters worse a swarm of mosquitoes began to besiege him and he was kept busy slapping first one place and then another.

His ankle no longer pained him but instead felt numb as though it had gone to sleep. He uttered a short but fervent prayer that God would send him help before it was too late and then feeling more calm he tried to sleep. But it was of no use. The mosquitoes tormented him so that sleep was out of the question. How dark it was. There was no moon and he was unable to see his hand held before his eyes.

"They say that everything has some use," he thought. "But blest if I can see why mosquitoes were ever made."

He had a few matches in his pocket and from time to time he lit one to see if his leg was still bleeding. It grew no worse in this respect and after a time he believed that it had stopped altogether.

"If only I could build a fire," he thought, "the smoke would drive these mosquitoes away."

But there was nothing within his reach to serve the purpose and he had to abandon the idea. He thought it must be nearly twelve o'clock when a glance at the luminous face of his watch told him that it was only a few minutes past nine.

"Morning will never come at this rate," he thought. "Oh, if these mosquitoes would only let me alone. Then I could sleep."

Another hour passed and to the boy it seemed almost endless. He was so drowsy that he could hardly keep his eyes open when he tried to but yet he could not sleep. Once he fancied that he did drop off but a glance at his watch told him that only two minutes had passed since he had looked at it before.

"It'll be a wonder if my hair isn't white before morning," he thought.

Just at that moment his heart gave a great leap. A faint but unmistakable buzzing reached his ears.

"The radio!" he thought. "Why in the world didn't I think of it before." In an instant he had the instrument out of his pocket.

"Hello," he almost shouted into it.

"That you, Bob."

Never, he thought had a voice sounded so sweet.

"Yes, it's what there is left of me."

"Did they get you?" Jack's voice was filled with anxiety.

"They didn't but it did."

"What's it."

"A bear trap."

For a moment the phone was silent and Bob feared that something had happened to it. Then Jack's voice came again.

"Do you mean that you are caught in a bear trap?"

"You guessed it."

"But how in the world did it happen?"

"I imagine I must have stepped on it," Bob answered dryly.

"I know that," Jack's voice came back impatiently. "I didn't suppose that you climbed up in a tree and stuck your foot in it. What I mean is didn't you see it?"

"I think not. If I had I doubt if I would have stepped in it."

"Oh, Bob, I don't mean to talk like an idiot but honest I'm so scared that I don't know what I am saying I guess. Now tell me where you are and if you're badly hurt."

"No, I don't think I'm very badly hurt. Of course

the trap has got a pretty good hold on my leg but it doesn't pain me so badly now. In fact I can hardly feel it at all. As to where I am I don't know of course. I fancy I'm eighteen or twenty miles from where you are and I came directly west. I know I'm not far from the line, but don't know just how far."

"All right. You just sit tight and I'll be there before you know it."

"Steady son, you couldn't find me in this darkness to save your soul. You'd only get lost. No, the best way will be to wait till daylight. It'll only be a few hours now and I can stand it. Remember you can get no sense of direction in these phones so I couldn't guide you till you got near enough to hear me without the phones."

"I suppose you're right as usual, but Bob, I'm scared stiff."

"You needn't be. I'm all right and if it wasn't for these pesky mosquitoes I could go to sleep. Now you hit the hay and get some rest. You'll likely have some hunt before you find me tomorrow and you'll need all your strength."

"But why didn't you call me on your phone. I've been trying to get you ever since it began to get dark but I just discovered a loose connection on my condenser and I guess the thing didn't work till just now."

"To tell the truth," Bob replied, "I never once thought of it. Funny wasn't it? But now you get to sleep."

At first Jack protested that it would be impossible for him to get to sleep, but after Bob had again assured him that he would be all right and that the best way in which he could help him right then was to sleep so as to be fresh for his hunt on the morrow, he consented to try and they bade each other good night.

Bob, much cheered by the conversation with his brother now accepted the situation philosophically.

"Well," he thought, "I little dreamed while we were working on these phones that they would so soon be the means of saving my life. It's a mighty lucky thing for me that we made them."

Hope made the time pass more quickly than it had before Jack called, but, nevertheless it seemed as though several nights had had time to go by before his watch told him that it was three o'clock. He was badly bitten by mosquitoes in spite of his efforts to keep them off, and his leg was beginning to pain him again.

"Too bad I didn't bring along a flash light," he thought as he struck his next to the last match to see if the leg was bleeding.

He did not think that it was but was quite sure that it was swelling pretty badly.

"Guess that's what's making it ache," he thought. "But it'll be light in less than an hour and Jack'll be starting. Pray God he finds me quickly."

A few minutes later a light breeze sprang up and as it increased in strength the mosquitoes vanished. With a sigh of relief Bob sank back and was almost instantly asleep despite the throbbing pain which was now manifesting itself in his leg.

He could have slept but a short time for it was still dark when he awoke conscious of a sound in the woods a short distance behind him. He listened and in a moment he heard it again. Some heavy animal was making its way slowly through the woods.

"That's either a moose or a bear," he thought. "Hope he don't take a notion to come this way. I'm not exactly in a position to put up much of a fight."

The animal was evidently in no hurry and for some minutes the boy was uncertain whether it was coming in his direction or not. But the uncertainty did not last long for soon a snapping of dead branches close at hand told him only too plainly that the animal was coming directly toward him. And a minute later all doubt regarding the identity of the visitor was dispelled by a low ominous growl.

"It's a bear sure as smoke," he told himself as he twisted around and managed to draw his automatic. "Now if I only had a flash light."

By this time bruin was only a few feet away as Bob could tell by the growls which came almost continually.

"He knows there's something here but is not sure just what it is, and is wondering what he had better do," Bob thought as he waited. "Hope he decides to let well enough alone and go on about his own business."

His gun was a forty-five easily capable of killing a bear with a single shot provided that shot landed in the right place. But to hit that place in the intense darkness was he knew a thousand to one shot. Unless very hungry or with cubs a bear will rarely attack a man and knowing this Bob hoped that the bear would let him alone. But fear sprang to his heart when, a moment later, he heard the low whine of a small cub.

"She'll get me if I don't get her at the first shot," he thought gripping his revolver. "And it'll be in a minute, too," he muttered as he heard the bear now but a few feet away. "Oh, for a bit of light!"

He waited until he knew that the bear was almost near enough for him to touch with his hand and was about to pull the trigger and trust to luck when something hit him a blow on the side of the head and he felt himself falling through what seemed miles of space then came oblivion.

Day was just breaking when Jack awoke. It had

been long after he wrapped himself in his blanket before sleep came. He knew Bob's penchant for putting the best foot forward and he feared that he was much worse off than he had let on. He sprang to his feet as soon as he could throw off his blanket and the first thought which entered his mind was the radio. Eagerly he began to call but there was no response. Hastily but thoroughly he looked the apparatus over to be sure that it was in order and when he could find nothing amiss he tried again.

But as before he could get no reply.

"Mebby he's asleep," he thought, and then his heart almost stopped beating as the possibility of his brother being dead entered his mind.

As quickly as possible, not stopping to eat, he rolled his pack and throwing both it and Bob's over his shoulder, he started at almost a run.

For a time he had little trouble in being certain that he was on the right track as, in the thinly wooded section, it was easy to locate the boundary stones and he remembered that Bob had told him that he was not far from the border line. Several times during the first two hours he stopped long enough to try the radio but each time he met with disappointment. And each time also he became more frightened. Surely Bob must be awake by this time and why did he not answer? The boy refused

to permit an answer to enter his mind. Bob could not be dead. He would not have it so.

As he entered the more thickly wooded district he was forced to go slower. Several times he had to hunt for what seemed an almost endless time before he could locate the marking stone and he dared not proceed until he had found it for fear of missing Bob altogether.

"He can't be a great way off now," he thought as he glanced at his watch and saw that it was nearly ten o'clock.

He had just spent nearly a half hour hunting before he located the last stone and he was almost sure that he had come nearly if not quite twenty miles. For the hundredth time he gave vent to the call of the whip-poor-will giving it the accent which he knew Bob would recognize.

"Why don't he answer?" he moaned.

"All at once he realized that he had eaten nothing since the night before and more because he knew how necessary it was that he should maintain his strength than through any desire for food he stopped long enough to swallow a few mouthfuls of bread and cheese, washing it down with water from a small brook which he was about to cross.

"Bob, Oh, Bob!" he shouted at the top of his voice throwing caution to the winds.

It is doubtful if any thought of their mission up

there in the wilderness had once entered his head since he had started. His one and only thought was to find his brother. And then his cup of misery seemed filled to the brim when he was unable to locate the next stone. For all of an hour he searched even crawling on his hands and knees a part of the time thinking that it might be covered with the dead leaves with which the ground was carpeted. The thought that his brother was lying, perhaps at the point of death, somewhere in that vast forest, perhaps but a few yards away and that he could not find him was maddening.

In fact, a few minutes later and he was wandering about aimlessly while dry sobs shook his body. Was he losing his mind, he wondered as he finally sank down at the foot of a great pine.

How long he sat there he never knew but he was brought back to himself by the sound of a peculiar whining. Instantly he jumped to his feet. There not ten feet away was a tiny bear cub. Now Jack knew that a cub of that size was not apt to be very far away from its mother and the thought that the old bear had probably killed his brother suddenly, as he afterward expressed it, made him see red. He started for the cub, which turned and scurried away as fast as its little fat legs would take it. The boy had a half insane idea that if he could only catch and kill the cub he would be helping his brother.

The thought that he might be running straight toward the mother bear never entered his mind and it is doubtful if it would have made the slightest difference if it had. In his present state of mind he would have attacked a dozen bears and that without thought of his own danger.

It was surprising how fast that fat little cub could run. Jack had all he could do to keep it in sight and once he thought he had lost it. But he caught sight of it again just as it plunged into a thick growth of bushes. Straight through the bushes Jack pushed himself heedless of the scratches he received.

As he emerged from the clump a moment later the cub was out of sight, but as he stopped to get his bearings he saw a sight he never forgot. There, not ten feet from where he stood, lay Bob and stretched across his legs was the body of an enormous black bear. Jack stood for a moment petrified at the sight. He knew instinctively that the bear was dead, but how about his brother?

Fear clutched at his heart as he sprang forward and threw himself on the ground by Bob's side.

"Oh, Bob," he moaned.

Then he steadied. Bob might not be dead after all. He laid his ear over his heart and the next moment he gave a great cry of joy. He was alive! His heart was beating regularly albeit somewhat faintly. And now Jack was himself again. The

past hour seemed like some horrid nightmare. Quickly he unscrewed the top from his canteen and soaking his handkerchief with the water he laid it on Bob's forehead. Then he began chafing his wrists. In a short time he noticed a slight flutter of the eyelids and as he quickly wet the cloth again and again placed it on his head the eyes slowly opened.

"Jack."

It was but a faint whisper, but it put new life into the boy who heard it.

"Dear boy, thank God you're alive."

"But the bear?" Bob whispered. "He was right on me."

"And he still is, but he's dead. Just a minute and I'll roll him off."

Only the bear's head was on Bob's legs but even so it took all the strength Jack could muster to swing it off.

"There now let's see if we can get that trap off," he said as he knelt down to examine it.

He saw that Bob's leg was badly swollen and he greatly feared that the bone was broken. But he said nothing of this to Bob.

It takes a strong man to open the jaws of a bear trap and probably not one man in a hundred could do it while the trap was closed on his own leg. But, as he afterward told Bob, Jack knew that it had to

be done and he did it. Necessity must have lent him strength for he tried it again later, and although he exerted all the strength he could muster, he could not spring the strong jaws apart.

Assuring himself again that Bob was still alive he examined the injured leg. It was badly swollen nearly to the knee and after carefully removing the legging and stocking he found that it was badly lacerated in a couple of places where the sharp teeth had bit through.

"Does it hurt much?" he asked anxiously.

"It's pretty sore. Think it's broke?" Bob asked faintly.

"I hope not but it's hard to tell while it's so swollen."

Fortunately Jack could hear a gurgle of water only a few feet away and in a few minutes he had bathed the leg with cold water and bandaged it.

"It's a good thing we had that first aid kit along," he finished.

"Yes, one never ought to be without one in the woods," Bob replied and Jack was rejoiced to note that his voice sounded much stronger.

"Now you lie still while I get dinner," Jack ordered.

"It was surprising in what a short time he could get a meal ready when he was in a hurry and now

he exerted himself to the utmost and in a very few minutes they were eating together.

"My, but that tastes good," Bob declared as he reached for another sandwich.

"Do you feel strong enough to tell me about it?" Jack asked as soon as they had finished.

"Sure. I feel all right except for the leg and a sore head. But there isn't a whole lot to tell."

"There's a whole lot of bear anyhow," Jack interrupted as he glanced at the huge animal." How did it happen?"

"Well, it was early this morning. I remember looking at my watch and it was three o'clock. Then the mosquitoes left and I fell asleep. Some noise woke me up a few minutes later and along came this fellow. I tell you, Jack, I thought my time had come. It was so dark that I couldn't see a thing. It came closer and closer till I had just decided to pull the trigger when something hit me on the side of the head and that's all I know. The next thing I knew you were bending over me. Did you shoot the bear?"

"Shoot nothing. Why you must have been unconscious for six hours or more. And you must have pulled that trigger just in time for she's shot right through the heart. Must have killed her instantly."

"It was a sure enough lucky shot for me," Bob sighed.

And then with one accord they both bowed their head and it is doubtful if two more heartfelt prayers ever ascended to Heaven.

"Give me a hand, Jack, and let's see if I can stand on this leg."

"Think you better try it so soon?"

"Sure. I'll go easy."

"Better let me give it the once over again, first."

He unwrapped the bandage and was glad to note that the swelling had subsided considerably.

"Does that hurt?" he asked as he moved the ankle a bit.

"No, not to amount to anything."

"Then it's not broken."

"I didn't think it was, but I'm sure some glad to be sure."

Jack again bandaged it and as soon as he had finished Bob insisted on trying to stand.

"I could walk on it if I had to," he declared after he had tested.

"Well, you don't have to to-day."

"I know. But she'll be all right by to-morrow."

"Here's hoping, but we'll camp right here for the present."

"You're the boss," Bob smiled as he leaned back against a tree.

"What'll we do with that bear?" Jack asked a little later.

"I don't see what we can do except leave it here. Did you see what became of the cub?"

"No. I was chasing it when I found you. In fact if it hadn't been for that cub I might never have found you at all."

"Suppose you take a look and see if you can find it. Now that its mother is dead it'll likely starve to death."

But though Jack hunted for more than an hour he failed to catch sight of it.

"Do you suppose it's gone off far?" he asked as he returned and reported his failure.

"More likely it's hiding somewhere close by."

But although Jack made another long search they never saw the cub again.

The swelling in Bob's leg continued to subside until by supper time it had nearly reached its normal size.

"She'll be fit as a fiddle by morning," Bob declared as he took a few steps.

"It was a good thing," he said a little later after they had finished supper and were sitting beside the fire, "that that wasn't a regular sized bear trap."

"What do you mean, regular sized?"

"Why that is a number four, the smallest size made. Didn't you ever see a number ten. It's about twice that size and no man living can set one without a clamp."

"Then I guess mebbby I'm not quite so powerful as I thought I was. Here I've been all puffed up thinking I'd sat a full sized trap and then you come along and make out that it's only a mink trap."

"Well, you'd have been satisfied to have it no bigger if it had been on your leg last night. But, Jack, one thing I can't understand is how that trap happened to be there."

"I don't think that's very hard. Probably some trapper set it there and then forgot or lost it."

"Just what I thought at first but if you'll stop and think a minute you'll remember that they don't set bear traps that way. Don't you remember two or three years ago Kernertok was telling us how they set them?"

"I don't seem to recall it. Guess you must have been there without me that time. But how is it? Guess that part of my education has been neglected."

"Why, they set them in houses. No, I mean it. You see they find a tree which has fallen partly over and then they lean other trees against it and pile boughs on till they have a kind of a little lean-to with a door just large enough for Mr. Bear to enter. In the back part they put the bait, a chunk of meat or fish, and set the trap right in the doorway. Then to make sure that the bear will step on the trap they stick little pieces of wood sharp at both ends in the

ground all around it so that he will be sure to step on the right spot."

The night passed uneventfully. They had decided to risk it without keeping watch and neither awoke until the sun had been up an hour.

CHAPTER X.

BOB HAS A HUNCH.

"WHAT do you know about it, Bob?"

"Know about what?"

"Why a whole night has passed and nothing has happened."

Bob laughed.

"That is rather unusual for a fact."

"Unusual, it's unprecedented. But how's the leg?"

"Almost as good as new," Bob declared after he had taken a few steps. "It's a bit sore and lame still but I can travel on it I reckon if we don't go too fast."

"Well, hereafter you'd better take me along with you. One or the other of us always seem to get into trouble when we separate."

"How's the grub holding out?"

"We got enough for two or three days if we don't eat too much."

"Well, suppose you see if there are any trout in

that brook. They'll taste mighty good for breakfast and help out on the supplies."

Jack was gone less than half an hour when he returned with enough fair sized fish for a meal.

"There were just eight more trout in that brook when you spoke than there are now," he laughed as he started to dress them.

Breakfast over they went, as Jack called it, into executive session of the committee of the whole to decide what was the next move to make.

"I still feel pretty sure that we are not very far from the scene of operations," Bob insisted and Jack agreed that he was probably correct.

"Then you think we had better just keep on and hunt?"

Bob was about to reply in the affirmative when suddenly the sound of a rifle shot rang through the forest.

"Listen."

"Remington 38," Jack declared.

"And not very far away either."

He had hardly spoken when two more shots came close together and from nearly the opposite direction.

"They're on both sides of us whoever it is," Jack said.

"Right, and the all important question is whether it's someone hunting or were those shots signals."

"It's closed season for hunting," Jack reminded him.

"I know, but I have an idea that that don't bother the natives up here a whole lot. I guess they hunt about when they've a mind to law or no law."

"Well, I guess we can't afford to take a chance and find out. Our best bet is to keep out of sight all we can."

"You said it."

By this time they were ready to start. No more shots were heard as they struck off toward the west traveling slowly so as to favor Bob's leg.

"Oh, by the way, Bob, did you find a boundary stone around here anywhere? I hunted nearly an hour for it yesterday and couldn't find it."

"Yes. There was one only about a dozen feet from where that trap was. I found it just before I stepped into it."

"Then we're on the track."

"Jack, I've got another hunch."

"Hope it isn't the same breed as the last one," Jack laughed.

"No, I think this is an honest to goodness one."

"All right then, spring it. What is it?"

"I think we're going to strike something inside of a very few minutes."

This time Bob's hunch was fulfilled quickly for they had not gone ten feet further when they came

to a trail running at rightangles to the way they were going.

"Some hunch, I'll say," Jack's tone was very sarcastic.

"It worked pretty well, that's a fact."

"Do you mean to tell me that you didn't see this trail before you had that hunch?"

"I sure didn't. If you don't believe it go back to where we were standing and see if you can."

"Oh, you know that if you say you didn't that settles it, and again I repeat, some hunch."

"Well, it sounds better when you say it that way," Bob laughed.

The trail which they had struck was one which had evidently been made recently. It was still very rough although there was abundant evidence to show that a vehicle of some kind had been driven over it.

"I believe we've struck it," Bob declared as he looked first one way and then the other.

"Wouldn't wonder. I don't know what else anyone would make a trail way up here for."

"Now which way'll we go, north or south?"

"Or camp right here and let them come to us?"

"Too slow that last."

"Thought you'd object. I vote we go north."

"Vote's unanimous. Come on."

"This trail must start somewhere," Bob grinned as they trudged along slowly. "How's the leg?"

"Not bad, but I'll have to favor it for a day or two I reckon."

"When it gets tired say so and we'll rest," Jack urged anxious lest he injure it.

"I'll sing out all right when I'm tired," Bob assured him.

About fifteen minutes later they were again brought to a halt by another shot.

"That's the 38 again," Jack said.

"And there's the answer," Bob said in a low tone as two more shots rang out.

"That makes it look like a signal."

"Nary doubt of it."

"Those shots sounded to me about the same distance away as before," Jack declared. "Now I sized it up before that one was to the east of us and the other to the west, and that seems to me to mean that they must be going about parallel to us and in the same direction. How does it strike you?"

"Right at home. Now why don't they meet as soon as they can?"

"Evidently because they're going to the same place by two routes."

"Head of the class for you."

"What next?"

"I think our best move will be to get out of the trail and follow it a little to one side. It's getting too thickly settled here to keep much in the open."

They had made about half a mile further without hearing any more shots and Bob was on the point of suggesting that they stop for a rest as his leg was giving him considerable trouble and he feared to tax it too heavily, when Jack, who was a few feet ahead, suddenly came to an abrupt stop.

"What did you hear?" Bob asked limping up.

"Nothing, but it looks to me as though we're coming out of the woods."

"Does look that way. Suppose you reconnoiter a bit while I rest this game leg."

"Right."

"But you be careful now, and don't go far," Bob cautioned.

"You know me," Jack replied as he crept softly away.

"He's a broth of a boy," Bob thought as he watched him as long as he was in sight.

In less than fifteen minutes Jack was back and Bob knew from the expression on his face that he had something important to report.

"There's an opening there," he announced. "And, Bob, unless I'm terribly mistaken it's been used as a landing field. There must be all of ten acres in it and it's smooth enough. And there's a cabin on the further side."

"One of the disappearing kind?"

"I don't think so. It's much larger."

"Didn't see anybody did you?"

"Not a soul, but I only waited a minute."

"Well, we'd better find a good place where we can watch without danger of being seen and we'd better do it quick too. Those fellows who have been doing the shooting are undoubtedly making for that cabin and we want to be cached before they get there."

After a short search they succeeded in finding just the right kind of a place. A cleft about three feet wide and eight feet long between two large rocks was closed at both ends by clumps of bushes. Once within the trench, as Jack called it, they were invisible to any one unless he climbed on to one of the rocks and looked down. On the other hand, by slightly parting the bush at the end nearer the clearing, they had an uninterrupted view of the entire field.

"Couldn't be better for our purpose," Bob declared, as he stretched out at full length on the ground and peeped out.

"There comes Tiny," he announced a moment later, as the giant emerged from the woods a little to the right of the cabin.

"Has he got a gun!"

"Yep, looks like a Winchester from here, but it's too far away to be sure. Wish I had the glasses."

"Well, keep your eyes peeled. The other guy ought to be along soon."

"And there he is. It's that little man—the white one—and he's got a gun, too."

"Then that settles who was doing the shooting," Jack declared.

"Not a mite of doubt about it and, Jack boy, I believe we've found the place at last. We must be two or three miles over into Canada and from here they can take the stuff over either by wagon or by flying machine."

"I guess you're right, but I suppose we ought to get more evidence before we report to the captain and get him up here."

"We'll get it all right pretty soon unless I'm greatly mistaken. There's Pierre, now."

"I guess the whole gang's there."

"Probably, except the ones that run the airplane."

"Suppose they're waiting for the ship."

"More than likely."

The men in the cabin seemed to be expecting something of the sort, for every little while one or more of them would come out and take a long look around, scanning the sky.

"There's a couple I never saw before. Take a peep," Bob said a few minutes later drawing back his head and making room for Jack.

"One of them is the man who talked with me the day I was fishing at the lake, but I don't know the other fellow," he said as he drew his head back. "They've gone in now."

"They're waiting for an airship all right judging by the way they're looking round."

"And we'll wait right here till it comes." Jack's voice bore a determined note.

"Guess we might as well eat a bite while we're waiting," Bob proposed.

"All right, but we've got to go a bit light or we'll be on short rations," Jack advised.

It proved that they were shorter on food even than he had thought and they had to satisfy themselves with a very light lunch indeed. But they were used to taking things as they came and neither complained.

It was about three o'clock when Bob held up his hand as Jack was talking.

"Listen."

"She's coming, sure as guns."

Faintly they could hear the distant purring of a motor. Bob parted the bushes and looked out.

"Can't see anything yet," he announced a moment later. "But Pierre has just touched a match to a pile of brush and it's sending up a big cloud of smoke. Must be a signal for him either to land or not to."

The sound of the approaching motor was rapidly

growing louder and soon Jack, who was at the peep hole, announced that he could see it.

"And it looks like it was a whopper."

"Sounds like a Liberty motor."

"That's what it is all right," Jack agreed. "And she's making some time, too."

In a short time they could see the machine without making use of the peep hole, as it circled about far up in the sky.

"He's coming down and he's planning to hit the ground right out in front of us."

"That's so," Bob agreed. "Hope he don't happen to glance down and see us," he added somewhat anxiously.

"Gracious! I never thought of that. Guess we'd better get under cover, though I don't suppose there's much danger. He'll be too busy with the plane to notice us."

"But we'll take no chance," Bob advised.

So they crawled into the bushes at the farther end of their hiding place and Bob expressed himself as satisfied that they were practically invisible to anyone from above.

They had hardly got settled when, with a noise as of a dozen gattling guns the big plane swooped down within a few feet of their heads. Instantly Bob crawled to the peep hole and looked out.

"Some landing," he announced as he drew back his head. "He rolled up to within a few feet of the door of the cabin. Just a minute and I'll see what they are doing."

But for some time there appeared no sign of activity about the cabin.

"Guess they're eating dinner," Jack said as he relieved Bob at the peep hole.

"More than likely, but I guess there'll be something doing before long," Bob agreed.

And he was right, for a few moments later Jack announced that the men had come out of the cabin.

"And they're loading something into the plane."

"Guess there's no doubt as to what it is."

"Not a bit. I guess we've got about all the evidence we need now," Jack declared.

"We'll wait till he gets off and then we'll hit the trail for Bangor and report to the captain. But we want to be sure and mark our trail so that we'll have no trouble in finding our way back."

It was about a half hour later that they heard the motor again.

"Guess he's ready to start. Yes, here he comes. Get into the bushes," Bob ordered.

Again they hid themselves and waited until the aviator was well up in the air.

"He's heading south," Bob declared as he looked up.

"Where do you suppose he's taking the stuff?"

"Gee, I never thought of that. I wonder if the captain can arrest them on Canadian soil."

"Well, I guess that's up to him. That fellow may land in Boston or New York or any other of a hundred places. He can't expect us to find out that part of it."

"Mebby he'll get another plane and chase him. Gee, wouldn't it be great if he'd take us with him?"

"Sure would, but I don't see how he could do that—I mean, get a plane up here. They'd be sure to see it and then it would be all off."

"Well, 'sufficient unto the day is the evidence thereof,' " Jack quoted. "Let's not worry about that part of it. I guess the captain will be able to work out some plan to do the trick, but I sure would like to chase that fellow the next time he takes a trip."

"Perhaps we'll have a chance. You never can tell."

As he finished speaking voices were heard approaching.

"Keep quiet," Bob, who was at the peep hole immediately, cautioned. "Here comes the whole gang."

The boys almost held their breath as the five men passed within a dozen feet of their refuge and struck off down the trail.

"I wonder if they have any suspicion that we are anywhereabouts," Jack whispered after the last man disappeared.

"Don't know why they should, but of course they do know that we are not a thousand miles away and there isn't much doubt but what they know what we are up in this part of the world for."

After waiting about an hour to give the men a good start of them they started. Following the trail south until they came to the place where they had struck it earlier in the day they left it and turned due east. Every little ways they broke a small twig from a bush or tree choosing a place where it would not be likely to be seen by any one else.

"We ought to reach the camp by night to-morrow if this game leg of mine holds out," Bob said as they trudged along.

"How does it feel?"

"Kinder weak, but I guess I can make it."

But he soon found that his leg was not so strong as he had thought and they were obliged to make frequent stops to rest, and, when it began to get dark, they estimated that they had not made much over ten miles on the return trip.

Just before they decided to camp for the night Bob made a lucky shot at a rabbit.

"I know it's out of season," he confessed, "but necessity knows no law. We've got to eat."

Risking a small fire they roasted the little animal and it proved a very welcome addition to their scanty store of food. They were both tired, Bob in particular, and after some discussion, they decided to take a chance without setting a watch. They found a good place where they felt that there was small danger of being found even if anyone should search for them, and rolling up in their blankets, were soon sound asleep.

The night passed without incident and the rising sun found them up and after a hasty breakfast, they were ready to start by five o'clock.

"How's the leg this morning?"

"Feels pretty good, if it will only continue to do so."

"Well, don't you be too hard on it. There's no absolute necessity of our making camp to-night. I can probably get a mess of trout for supper and we can make out."

"I know but I want to make it if we can. It can't be much over twenty-five miles."

"But that's a good long ways with a bum leg," Jack declared.

A little before ten o'clock they reached the place where Bob had been caught in the trap, and as his leg was causing him considerable pain, Jack insisted that they rest up for at least two hours. This, after considerable argument, Bob agreed to. In a short

time Jack caught a good mess of trout in the little brook and they made a hearty meal although, as Jack laughingly declared, their choice of courses was somewhat limited. As soon as the meal was over and the dishes washed Jack insisted on having a look at the wounded leg, although Bob insisted that it was all right.

"Say, who's the doctor here," he demanded and Bob laughingly yielded the point.

The leg was still slightly swollen about the ankle and there was some inflammation where the teeth had broken the skin.

"I don't just like the looks of that ankle," he said as he sopped a little iodine on it.

"Ouch, but that smarts," Bob winced.

"It'll do it good all the same."

"I'll say it ought to."

He bathed the leg with the cold water from the brook and Bob soon declared that it felt nearly as well as before it had been hurt.

"I hope that iodine takes that inflammation out," Jack said as he put on a new bandage."

"I guess it will be all right. It's strong enough to take out almost anything," Bob assured him.

Shortly after twelve they started off again and Bob assured Jack that the rest and treatment had made his leg feel a hundred percent better.

They had made but about a mile when Bob, who was in the rear, fancied that he heard a noise but a short distance behind them.

"Hold on a minute," he called in a low voice.

Jack at once turned and waited for him to come up.

"I'm not sure but I think we're being followed," he whispered. "There, did you hear that?"

"That" was the sound of a man's voice now plainly audible.

"And they're only a little ways behind too," Jack declared. "We've got to run for it." Then as he thought of Bob's leg he hesitated. "Think they know we're ahead of them?"

"Ask me something easy, but they're coming this way all right. I think we'd better run for it."

"But your leg, it's—"

"Bother the leg. I tell you they're after us."

"Well, you go first or I won't move a step."

Bob did not wait to argue the point for the men were approaching rapidly as he could tell by the sound. He started off at a rapid pace and Jack followed close behind. At first they seemed to gain on their pursuers but Bob quickly realized that he would be unable to keep up the pace for but a short time and slowed up.

"Leg, bad?" Jack asked anxiously.

"It gives me the dickens when I try to hurry," Bob panted.

"What had we better do?"

"Go as far as I can. We may shake them off."

But he had little hope as he said it. An occasional sound from the rear told him that they were no longer gaining if indeed they were holding their own.

"They're almost up to us," Jack panted a few minutes later. "I think we might as well stop and make a stand with the gun. We can get the drop on them."

Just as he finished speaking a strange thing happened. Bob, who was only a few feet ahead of him, suddenly disappeared as though the ground had swallowed him up. Jack stopped and stared. Then he took a few steps ahead and the next moment the earth dropped from beneath him and he felt himself falling.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GROUND OPENS AT THE RIGHT TIME.

JACK dropped but a few feet and landed unhurt in absolute darkness.

"Thought you'd drop in."

It was Bob's voice and the next moment Bob's arm was about his shoulder.

"Keep perfectly still now and they may go past us," he whispered.

"But suppose they drop in too?"

"I think they are too far to the right. Listen."

The sound of their pursuers could be plainly heard now as they pushed their way rapidly through the woods.

"I tink we geet 'em plenty queek, now," they heard one say.

"Oui, they only leetle distance off," another answered.

"You bet we mak' short work dis time we geet 'em."

But their voices were growing fainter and soon died out all together.

Bob gave a big sigh of relief.

"Talk about luck," he said. "Whoever dug this bear pit and covered it over so slick certainly did us a good turn."

"He sure did. They'd have had us by this time."

"We'd better stay right where we are for awhile. When they find out that we aren't ahead they may come back."

He was correct in his surmise for inside of a half hour they heard them returning.

"Here they come," he whispered. "Keep perfectly still and perhaps they won't find us."

Then men were now talking rapidly in French and they could only catch a word here and there, but they got enough to understand that they were puzzled to know what had become of them.

"Don't move," Bob whispered. "They are pretty close."

For fully a half hour they could hear the men beating the woods all about them but their luck held and finally they must have given up the search for all was quiet. They waited another half hour to be sure that they were not coming back then Bob said:

"Now the question is are we going to be able to get out of here."

It was pitch dark in the pit, the covering having sprung back into place as soon as they had dropped through. By feeling about they found that it was

nearly circular and about eight feet in diameter, with perpendicular walls.

"How deep should you say this pit is," Bob asked.

"Not far from eight feet, I should judge."

"Just my estimate. Now, you'd better get up on my shoulders and see if you can climb out."

But the pit was a little deeper than they had thought, and standing on his brother's shoulders, Jack found that he could barely touch the covering with the tips of his fingers.

"No go that way," he announced as he jumped down.

"Then I'm afraid we're in a pickle."

"Where's your flash?"

"Lost it yesterday morning. It must have fallen out of my pocket. Got yours?"

"I have it all right but the battery's played out. It must have been a punk cell that fellow gave me for it hasn't been used but a little. Wait till I see him again."

"If you ever do," Bob said and then quickly added, "I didn't mean to say that. We've been in worse fixes than this and came out all right."

"Yep, but I don't recall any of them just now," and Bob noticed a note of despair in his brother's voice.

"How are you fixed for matches?" he asked.

"Got a box about half full."

"Suppose you light one and we'll take a look. I used the last one I had the other night."

Jack struck the match and as the light flared up they looked eagerly about them but the sight was not encouraging. Beside themselves there was absolutely nothing in the pit.

"Doesn't seem to be much here to work with," Jack said gloomily as the match died out.

"Not a whole lot that's a fact."

"Suppose we can dig toe holds in the side?"

"I'm afraid it's too soft but we can try it."

Bob's surmise was correct. They had no difficulty in digging niches in the sides of the wall with their knives but the earth was so soft that it crumbled away as soon as they tried to step in them.

"Failure number two," Bob tried to make his voice as cheerful as he could but feared that he was not very successful.

"How about the third?"

"The third is going to be slow but I believe it will be sure. You said that you could just touch the top didn't you?"

"Yep, just brushed it."

"All right then. Now all we've got to do is to take our kit spoons and dig into the wall till we get

a mound a foot or more high, then I guess you can make it."

"Brains do come in handy once in a while for a fact," Jack declared much more cheerfully.

They lost no time but went about the task at once. To their great satisfaction they found that the work went much faster than they had thought it would. The wall was of soft dirt, and with the strong spoons they could scrape it down with little difficulty. Every few minutes they would stop and heap the dirt up in a mound against the side of the pit and pat it down with their feet. It was just damp enough to pack well and in a little less than two hours Bob declared that he believed they had a pile high enough.

"If it'll only hold," he said as he tested it with his weight while Jack struck a match and held it close.

"It's none too solid," he announced. "But mebbby she'll do."

He got to his brother's shoulder's while he stood to one side of the mound.

"Go easy now," he cautioned as Bob stepped forward.

"Easy it is."

But alas for their hopes. The added weight of Jack was too much for the mound of dirt and it gave away just as his fingers reached the covering.

"I was afraid it wasn't strong enough," Bob said as Jack again jumped from his shoulders.

"And your fears were well founded, worse luck," Jack groaned.

"Well, no use in crying over spilt milk or dirt either for that matter. We'll have to dig more down and build it stronger that's all."

So they worked for another hour when Jack declared that they must have about enough dirt to fill the pit with.

"If we keep on much longer we can build a mound clear to the top," he declared.

This time they took more pains in packing the earth good and solid and it held. Jack found that his head just hit the covering when he stood on Bob's shoulders. Leaning his back against the wall he reached up with his hands and started to make an opening. This proved easy as the top was spanned with long poles which in turn were covered with boughs on which was laid a covering of dirt and leaves. Quickly he pulled aside some of the boughs letting in a flood of light.

"Steady now," he called. "I'm going up."

Grasping hold of two of the poles he had little trouble in raising himself through the opening and a moment later was on the ground.

"Just a minute now till I find a pole for you to climb up on," he called back.

In a few minutes he had found what he wanted in the shape of a small fallen pine and in another five minutes Bob was standing by his side.

"One more scrape conquered."

"Yes, and I was just wondering if we'd always be as fortunate," Bob said soberly.

"Here's hoping," Jack replied as he began to strap his pack on his back.

So much time had been lost that they abandoned all hope of reaching the camp that night.

"We ought to get in in time to make Bangor with the bikes before to-morrow night, so it won't make a whole lot of difference," Jack said hopefully as they started off.

"If we weren't so short of grub it wouldn't be so bad," Bob returned as he took an extra notch in his belt. "What I wouldn't do to a good square meal right now is a shame."

"Reckon I could do something in the eating line myself," Jack laughed back.

They camped that night near the spot where they had seen the vanishing cabin. The last crumb of their supply was gone when they finished their supper and even then Jack declared that he was not half filled up.

"Never mind; it's not good to eat too much just before going to bed, and I'll get a mess of trout for breakfast," he promised.

He kept his word, and after a hasty breakfast the following morning they started off in excellent spirits.

Bob's leg was much better and Jack noted with great satisfaction that the inflammation had entirely disappeared when he examined it just before the start.

They saw nothing of their enemies and reached the camp just after eleven o'clock.

"You look as though you'd had a pretty hard tramp," the proprietor greeted them as they came into the office.

"Oh, not so bad," Bob replied easily. "We're leaving right after dinner. Please make out our bill."

"Somehow I don't quite trust that man," Bob said as they went to their cabin.

"He's got a bad eye if you ask me."

They waited impatiently for the dinner horn to sound and at the first welcome blast they quickly made their way to the dining-room.

"There, I'll bet he didn't make much profit on that meal," Jack laughed as he pushed back his chair some forty minutes later.

"I reckon he made up for it on the ones we missed."

When they went into the office to pay their bill the proprietor tried adroitly to learn something

about their trip. But they answered him evasively and escaped as soon as they could without being rude.

"Guess he didn't get much information though he tried hard enough," Bob grinned as they returned to the cabin for their wheels.

"You'd make a dandy lawyer the way you side-stepped him."

"You were no slouch yourself when it comes to that."

They reached Bangor shortly before five o'clock and made their way at once to the address given them by the Captain. They were fortunate enough to find the officer in and alone.

"Well, well," he said as he shook them warmly by the hand. "I was just thinking about you boys and wondering what had become of you. Didn't know but what I'd have to send out a relief expedition."

It took the boys a good half hour to tell their story. The captain made no comment, except to ask a question now and then, until they had finished, then he said:

"I don't think I need tell you that you have done more than well, but I thought I told you that I didn't want you to get into any danger."

"Pardon me, but as I remember it, you said 'unnecessary danger,' " Bob replied.

"Well, perhaps I did use the adjective," the captain laughed. "But, necessary or unnecessary, it seems that there was danger enough. But the good Lord sent you back unharmed and successful, for which I am deeply grateful. If anything had happened to you I could never have forgiven myself," and the boys were somewhat surprised to see tears in his eyes.

"What do you make of those vanishing cabins, sir," Jack asked.

"It's as big a mystery to me as it can be to you. It's certainly a strange tale you tell."

"I'd find it hard to believe myself if I hadn't seen it, or perhaps had not failed to see it," Jack smiled.

"Don't think for a minute that I doubt what you have told me," the captain said quickly.

"I didn't mean it that way," Jack assured him. "I meant that it does sound incredible.

"Well, there is, of course, some explanation to it and we'll get to the bottom of it before long or know the reason why," the captain smiled. "And now I want you to take a couple of days' rest as my guests. Oh, your Uncle Samuel pays the bills," he added as he saw the boys exchange glances.

"But we don't really need any rest, sir," Bob assured him.

"Better let me be the judge of that. You see, it will take me all of that time to make arrangements,

and I imagine there's no great hurry. They won't be apt to send over another load for a few days at any rate."

"Might I ask how you intend to go at it?" Jack asked.

"You can ask anything," the captain smiled, "but that is a pretty hard question to answer just at present because, candidly, I don't know. What would you suggest?"

"Well, we were discussing the thing while we were watching that cabin and wondered if there was any way in which you could chase that fellow in a plane. Frankly, we couldn't figure out how you could do it, as they'd be sure to see you and signal him not to light."

"You didn't run across any other place near there where a machine could take off, I suppose?"

"There's none this side of it, that's sure," Bob replied.

"I supposed not, and it's probably about the same the other side."

"Not much doubt about that, I'm afraid."

"Well, let's go to supper and we'll talk it over later. But you'd better call up your folks first. I know they must be anxious about you," the captain proposed.

It took but a few minutes to get connected with their home in Skowhegan and they learned that

their parents were much worried about them. They told them something of their experiences but left out all about the danger they had incurred.

"Time enough to tell them about that later," Bob explained as he hung up.

"Can you arrest them on Canadian soil?" asked Bob as they were about to leave the office.

"It could be done, I suppose, but I'd much rather get that fellow with the goods this side of the line."

They went to the hotel where the captain was stopping and he secured a fine room for the boys next to his own.

"This'll make it handy for us," he explained.

After supper they spent a very enjoyable evening at the theatre with the captain, but nothing more regarding plans for the capture of the liquor runners was said.

"We'll have a good long talk about it in the morning," the captain told them as he bade them good-night.

"He's sure one peach of a man," Jack declared as they were undressing, and Bob heartily agreed with him.

CHAPTER XII.

PLANS

"ALL right. Don't shoot, I'll come down."

"No one's going to shoot you," Jack laughed as he gave Bob another shake. "Awful sorry to wake you up, old man," he apologized as Bob finally got his eyes open and sat up in bed.

"Say, what's the big idea?"

"That's just it. It's too big to keep."

"Well, it had better be, or I'll teach you to wake me up in the middle of the night."

"Well, if you say it isn't worth it I'll take the teaching. Listen."

For several minutes Jack talked rapidly while Bob listened without comment until he had finished.

"I'll say that's a peach of a plan," he declared enthusiastically as Jack came to a pause.

"Worth waking you up for?"

"I'll say it is. Where'd you get it?"

"It just came to me as I was thinking it over."

"Well, it's a peacherino all right, and we'll spring it on the captain first thing in the morning and I'll bet he'll jump for it."

They talked the plan over for several minutes longer and Bob declared that there was not a flaw in it.

"Well, boys, have you thought of any way to get those fellows?"

The boys, together with the captain, had finished breakfast and had returned to the latter's room for a conference.

"Jack has," Bob replied.

"Good. I'll have to confess that I haven't been able to work out anything at all satisfactory."

"Well, it's like this, sir. You see we worked out a small pocket radio phone a little while ago which seems to work pretty well. Here it is." And he pulled the case from his pocket and handed it to the captain.

"You say you can talk with this?" the captain asked, much interested.

"Yes, sir. We know it'll work for at least sixty miles because we have tested it that far."

"Wonderful. What will you boys do next?"

"Now," Bob continued, much pleased at the captain's praise, "Jack's plan is to get a fast plane with a good driver and have him all ready somewhere near here. Then we can go up there and watch for

that fellow. Of course one of us will stay with the machine with one of these phones and the other will guide you and your men, taking the other phone. Then when he is about to start we can call and tell the driver and he can get after him. As soon as the plane is out of sight you can arrest the men and, if the man with your plane is successful, you'll get the whole gang."

"Bully; couldn't be better, and I will act on it at once. I know just the fellow for the job. He made a record bringing down German planes during the war and he's still in the government. I'm pretty sure he's at Washington right now and we ought to be able to get him up here by the day after tomorrow at the latest. I've got enough men here for the other part of it and I'll have time to arrange for the authority to make the arrest in Canada."

"Then you think it will work," Jack asked.

"Don't see how it can help it. Of course there will be a possibility that he might miss him, but with a pair of good field glasses he ought not to. But, come on. We'll go out and get a wire off to Captain Brice. That's the fellow's name."

"I think I remember reading about him in the papers," Bob said.

"No doubt. There was a lot about him in the press the last year of the war. Believe me, he is some flyer."

They went to a nearby telegraph office and the captain sent his message, making use of the government code, after which they went to the Captain's office.

"Now suppose you boys wait here in case a reply comes before I get back. I want to go down to the city hall to arrange about the papers for the arrest of those rascals. I don't think I will be gone more than an hour."

He was back in just an hour and told the boys that he would have the necessary papers early the next day. He had been back only a few minutes when a boy came in with a telegram from Washington.

"Good," the captain said as soon as he had read it. "Brice says that he is just leaving. Nothing could be better."

"What time will he get here?" Bob asked.

"Well, now, that's pretty hard to tell. You know an airplane is still a pretty uncertain quantity, but if he has no trouble he ought to get here some time this afternoon. It's about seven hundred and fifty or eight hundred miles from here and he ought to make it in eight or ten hours."

The day passed quickly and they had just returned to the office when the phone rang.

"That was Brice," the captain said after a short conversation. "He has just landed about five miles

out of town. Come on, we'll get my car and go out for him."

They found Captain Brice waiting for them on the porch of an old farm house, and the greeting between the two captains was very hearty, as they were old friends. Then the boys were introduced and the red blood mounted to their cheeks at the words of praise bestowed upon them.

"Brice, if there are two smarter boys than these I'd like to see them. You just wait till I tell you some of the things they've done."

They drove at once to the hotel, and after supper went to the captain's room, where he explained the situation to Captain Brice.

"And now what do you think of it?" he asked.

"Don't see how it could be better."

"Then you think you can get him?"

"Don't see why not. It's the best bet you've got, and I think it will work. That is unless he's got a faster machine than I have, and I don't think it has been made yet," he added with a note of pride.

When the captain showed Captain Brice the pocket radios he looked at them in wonder.

"Do you mean to tell me that you made these and that they'll work?" he asked, turning to Bob.

"Sure they made them, and that's nothing compared to some other things they've invented. Why, you ought to see a new cell that they run their motor

cycles and motor boat and auto with. As inventors they've got Edison backed off the mat," and the captain looked at the boys with pride.

"And are they the boys who helped you out last summer with the moonshiners?"

"They sure are?"

"Then I've heard a lot about you," Captain Brice said, turning to the boys. "Last winter Jim could talk of nothing else."

"I'm afraid the Captain is inclined to exaggerate," Bob stammered.

It was on a Friday that Captain Brice came to Bangor and, after talking the matter over at some length, it was decided that they would not make the start before Tuesday. Captain Jim, as Captain Brice called him, was of the opinion that it would be several days at least before the smugglers attempted another flight and Captain Brice announced that he would have to take some time to go over his motor to be sure that it was in first class condition.

"There was a bit of a knock in her coming up and I think she's got a loose wrist pin," he said.

Captain Brice was very much interested in the new cell about which Captain Jim was so enthusiastic and nothing would do but he must be shown the wheels which were fitted up with them. At Bob's invitation

he went for a short ride on one of them and on his return he was fully as zealous about it as was Captain Jim.

"If we'd only had that cell in the war and had some of our planes equipped with them," he said. "Just think what it would have meant to us to have been able to sail through the air without making a sound. It was the noise of the motors that gave us away every time. Do you think, boys, that they could be made large enough to drive a plane?"

"I don't see why they couldn't be, although we have never tried it. We have a runabout over home which is equipped with one of them about four times as large as these and it will hit sixty on a good road."

"What do you estimate the strength of this cell?"

"We have found by experiment that the power increases very nearly as the square of the diameter of the cell. This one, as you see, is about an inch in diameter and it develops very nearly four horse power."

"Great Scott, then one a foot in diameter would develop five hundred and seventy-six horse power. Think of it Jim."

"I have thought of it many times," Captain Jim smiled.

"I'll say it would run a plane," Captain Brice declared.

The following morning the boys spent with Cap-

tain Brice watching him as he worked on his motor and helping whenever they could.

"That's a liberty isn't it?" Jack had asked as soon as he saw it.

"Yes."

"And we're pretty sure that that fellow has a liberty also."

"And you're wondering if I'm going to be able to catch him?"

Jack blushed.

"Well, you see, sir, I——" he began when the captain interrupted.

"Sure I see, but you see I've got a new type of carburettor here which is the only one ever made because I made it myself and so far it has given this old buss nearly fifty per cent. more speed than she had before, and she could give any of them a good run before I made the change."

At noon they met Captain Jim at the hotel and they had dinner together.

Captain Jim announced that he had the warrants for the arrest of the men all in shape and Captain Brice said that he would easily be able to finish with the plane on Monday.

"Then I guess we can consider ourselves at liberty for the week end," Captain Jim said as he pushed back his chair. "What'll we do?"

"How about driving over to Skowhegan and staying with us," Bob proposed.

"That would be fine for us," Captain Jim smiled. "But I'm afraid it would be a piece of imposition on your folks."

"Not a bit of it," Bob assured him. "Father and Mother are always glad for us to bring our friends to the house and we've got plenty of room. If you'll give me a minute I'll call up and make sure that they are at home. You see, sometimes they run up to Moosehead Lake over Sunday but I don't think they're going this week or they would have said so when I was talking with them yesterday."

He rejoined them a few minutes later with the announcement that his father and mother would be delighted to have them all come.

"We're lucky, Brice," Captain Jim said.

They drove over in Captain Jim's car. The boys left their bikes at the hotel garage but the cells they took with them.

Mr. and Mrs. Golden gave them a most heartily welcome and after an early supper they drove to Moosehead Lake in his big car. They spent the Sabbath very quietly at the cabin returning early Monday morning.

"It's no wonder that these boys have turned out so well," Captain Brice declared as they started off for Bangor after bidding the Golden's good-bye.

"They couldn't help it with such parents."

"They sure are the best ever," Bob said flushing with pleasure."

They got back just in time for dinner and as soon as the meal was over Captain Brice and the boys left to complete the work on the plane while Captain Jim said that he would be kept busy the rest of the day rounding up his men and making final arrangements for the trip north.

"How many men will you take," Jack asked.

"I thought about four would be enough. That will make six of us and you say there were but five of them besides the aviator."

"I guess that will be a plenty unless it should come to a rough and tumble. In that case I would hate to be one of three or four ordinary men to tackle that Big Tiny."

"Well, I guess it won't come to that," Captain Jim laughed. "You may be sure we'll go well armed and we won't take any chances."

"Come out to the field if you get through in time," Captain Brice said.

"I will if I get a chance, but I've got a lot to do and it's doubtful if I get through in time. You see we may have to stay up there in the woods several days and that means that we've got to pack a lot of stuff to eat. Six men in the woods consume some food, eh Bob."

"I'll say they do." Bob laughed.

"Which one of you boys is going to stay with me?" Captain Brice asked as they were driving out to the farm.

"Why, Jack will stay of course."

"Now, Bob, I—" Jack began but Bob interrupted.

"Not a bit of it, son. This plan was yours and you are going to stay with the captain and help him catch that flyer."

Bob knew how his brother had longed for a chance of this sort and was determined that he should have it. So, although Jack protested that as Bob was the eldest he ought to stay he would not hear of it, declaring that he doubted if Jack would be able to find his way back to the smugglers' cabin.

By four o'clock Captain Brice pronounced the plane in first class condition and, to the boys' great delight, he took them with him on a trial flight, the machine being capable of carrying three.

Although it was not the first time the boys had been in the air they had never dreamed of such speed as the plane developed, and they were thrilled as they watched the hand of the dial creep up until it touched one hundred and twenty-five miles an hour.

They remained in the air about a half hour and when they alighted the captain announced that he was well satisfied with the condition of the plane.

"I should think you would be," Jack declared.

"I've made a hundred and forty in her," the captain said.

"How fast do you suppose that other fellow can go?" Bob asked.

"Probably not much over a hundred unless he's got something outside of the ordinary."

"Then we ought to be able to catch him all right." Jack declared.

"We'll do our best."

"You bet we will."

Captain Jim had already made arrangements for Captain Brice and Jack to board at the farm house.

They returned to the hotel shortly before six o'clock and Captain Jim joined them a few minutes later.

"Well I guess I've got everything all ready at last," he announced.

"What time do we start?" Bob asked.

"I've told the men to be here at five o'clock."

"Then we ought to reach the place sometime Wednesday afternoon if we have good luck."

"That's what I reckoned on."

"And we'll move out to the farm right after dinner Wednesday," Captain Brice said.

As soon as they had eaten supper they went to Captain Jim's room to talk over the final arrangements.

"Now it won't do for us to go to Jackman," the captain began as soon as they were seated. "I don't trust the fellow who runs the camp where you boys put up. I haven't anything on him but he's been more or less under suspicion for some time and he knows me. The presence of so many of us in the small town would be sure to make talk and it's almost sure that they would get wind of it one way or another."

"What will we do then?" Bob asked.

"My plan is to go in the car up to within about five or six miles of the town and then hide the cars. We'll go in two cars as we'll be less apt to attract attention that way. Then we can strike off through the woods from there. How does it strike you?"

"Fine," Bob replied.

"All right, then, we'll leave it that way."

"Are the woods pretty thick near that field, Bob?"

"They sure are. I don't think I ever saw it any thicker a bit back."

"That's fine. We can make camp back in the woods and take turns watching from that place you spoke of between the rocks. Of course we'll have to take a chance on them discovering us."

"Smoke will be the main thing we'll have to look out for," Bob declared.

"But we'll have to do some cooking I suppose."

"How about taking an oil stove along?"

"I hadn't thought of that. Won't it be too bulky to carry? And then there's the oil."

"There's a little collapsible stove on the market that we can easily carry and a couple of gallons of oil will probably last us," Bob explained.

"That would be just the thing," the captain declared. "Suppose you and I go out and see if we can find one."

They had to visit several stores before they found what they wanted but finally they succeeded and returned to the room in high spirits.

"That's the one thing that has worried me more than anything else," Captain Jim said as he exhibited the stove to the others. "Isn't it a dandy stove?"

"Just the thing I should say," Captain Brice agreed. "These boys of ours seem to have an answer for everything."

"And you don't half know them yet," Captain Jim told him.

"Well, I'm getting acquainted," Captain Brice laughed.

As they were to get up at four o'clock they separated soon after nine and the boys lost no time in getting into bed.

"I do hope that this goes off all right," Bob said.

"Don't see why it shouldn't."

"Nor do I but you can never tell. I could mention a number of things that might knock our plans into a cocked hat."

"Such as what?"

"Well, they might get on to us for one thing and then that might have been the last load for another,"

"You mean they may have given it up?"

"It's possible."

"Don't you believe it."

"I don't, but as I say, it's possible."

"So are a lot of things which are not going to happen. Let's not cross our bridges before we get to them."

"All right, we won't and now for some sleep."

It was just beginning to get light when a tap on the door brought them quickly out of bed and into their clothes. They found the two captains all ready for the breakfast which Captain Jim had arranged for the night before. The cars were waiting outside by the time they had finished and introductions were made all around.

"Captain Jim's sure got a fine bunch of men," Bob whispered to Jack.

"They do look as though they could give a good account of themselves in a fight," Jack replied. "I wish we could all go together."

"Same here, but that's out of the question."

"We'll start first and you leave in just a half an hour," Captain Jim said to one of his men. "I don't want any one along the road to see us all together. Those fellows have got confederates all over, and at the least suspicion some one will be sure to notify them. We'll wait for you about a mile the other side of Jim Cutter's place. You know where that is, don't you?"

"Sure, I know it," the man assured him.

"All right. Now just about a mile the other side is a woods road which runs off to the left and we'll be waiting up there. Don't drive over thirty miles an hour then we won't get too close together."

Captain Jim together with Bob and one of the men, a big broad shouldered giant named John Sands, got into his machine and after bidding Captain Brice and Jack good-bye they were off.

"Now for it," the Captain said as he guided the car away from the hotel.

CHAPTER XIII.

HI STONE.

IT was just a quarter to nine when they turned off the main road into the woods road. It was very rough and Captain Jim had to drive very carefully. He followed the road for about a quarter of a mile and then turned off between two big trees and ran the car into a thick clump of small pines.

"There, I don't believe anybody will be apt to see her there," he declared.

They had to wait about forty minutes before the other car arrived.

"Every thing all right," the Captain asked after the second car was well hidden.

"Slick as grease," the man who had driven the car assured him. "We only passed two cars all the way up after leaving the city."

The packs had already been made up and they lost no time in getting off.

"Sure you can find your way from here, Bob?" the Captain asked as they started off side by side, the others bringing up the rear.

"I think so."

"Well, if you can you're a good one at it."

At this point the forest was very dense and the going rough. Bob had nothing but his sense of direction to guide him, and it must be confessed, he was a little worried for fear he might go astray.

Twice he stopped and climbed a tall tree to make sure that he was on the right track.

"Sure you're right?" the Captain asked as he jumped to the ground the last time.

"Pretty sure, sir. I think we'll hit the border line in about a half a mile and then it'll be clear sailing so far as getting lost is concerned."

"We're all right now," he declared a little later. "Here's the place where we saw, or thought we saw, that cabin."

"It don't look as though there had ever been a cabin here," the Captain said as he glanced around.

"I know it and that's the queer part of it."

A little farther on they stopped for dinner and while one of the men was getting the meal ready, Bob, at the Captain's request, told the others all about the vanishing cabins.

"Any of you fellows ever hear anything of the kind?" the Captain asked as soon as he had finished.

None of them had and Bob fancied that he saw one of them wink at another.

"Can't blame them for not believing it," he told himself as he felt the hot blood rising to his face.

They pushed on during the afternoon making as good time as possible for the Captain was anxious to reach their destination as early the following day as they could.

"We might just miss them and have to wait nearly or quite a week before they'd make another trip," he explained.

They made camp that night not far from where Bob had been caught in the trap and he told the Captain that they ought to get to the end of the journey not much later than noon the next day.

"That'll be fine. Several hours earlier than I expected."

"We have made good time," Bob agreed.

After the supper dishes had been cleaned up the Captain asked Bob to again describe the small man whom he believed to be the leader of the gang of smugglers.

"Any of you place him?" he asked after Bob had finished.

"Did you notice whether or not he was bald?" one of the men asked.

"No, he had his hat on every time I saw him," Bob replied.

"Well, I'm not sartin' but that description fits Hi Stone pretty well," the man said.

"Who's Hi Stone?" the Captain asked.

"Lives about two miles this side of the Forks. Don't know much about him. He's only been in these parts about a year or a year and a half."

"Any reason for thinking he might be in the business?"

"Only that he always seems to be pretty well supplied with money and never appears to have to work much. I got a cousin lives about a mile the other side of him and he told me about him. I never saw him more than two or three times."

"Then you don't know anything actually against him?"

"No, not a thing except what I've told you."

"Well, I guess we couldn't jail him for that," the Captain smiled, "but it's worth knowing."

"I don't think it's much over an hour from here," Bob told the captain when they stopped for lunch the following day.

Although they had kept a sharp watch they had neither heard or seen a soul since entering the forest.

But it was a little farther than Bob thought and it was nearly two o'clock when he stopped and announced that the big field was just ahead.

"Suppose we wait here while you go on and see if there's anyone in sight," the Captain said.

Bob crept silently forward and in a few minutes was once more between the two big rocks. Eagerly

he parted the bushes and peeped out. Not a soul in sight and he noticed that no smoke came from the chimney.

"Guess there's no one at home," he thought as he drew back his head.

He hurried back to where he had left the rest of the party and made his report to the Captain.

"Then the thing for us to do is to find a good place to camp where they won't be likely to find us and wait."

They searched through the woods for some time before finding a place which suited their needs but at last they decided on a spot about an eighth of a mile from the edge of the field. It was in a thick clump of pines and all agreed that there would be little likelihood of discovery unless someone should stumble upon them by accident.

"Suppose you go back and stand the first watch," the Captain proposed to Bob, "while we are getting things shipshape. I'll send a man to relieve you in a couple of hours."

Stretched at full length between the two rocks Bob had hard work to keep awake, and was very glad when one of the men crept up and told him that he was to go back to camp.

"Haven't seen anything I suppose," he said.

"Not a thing."

"Well, I hope they show up before long. Hanged if I like this waiting game."

When he got back to camp Bob found that they had, by sawing down three or four small pines and sticking the trees up between others, left a circular space about twelve feet across so thickly hemmed in that they would be invisible to anyone on the outside.

"You certainly have made it good and snug," he told the Captain.

"I guess we'll be fairly safe here," Captain Jim replied with a smile.

They had brought no tents with them having decided that it would be too risky. But they were all more or less used to sleeping in the open. The men were busy gathering spruce boughs for beds and in a short time Bob had his own ready.

"Now I guess there's nothing to do but wait," he said to the Captain.

"That's about all I guess. Let's hope it won't be a long one."

"It can't be any too short to suit me," Bob declared.

"Well, I have found that there's a lot of waiting to do in this game," the Captain said.

"How do you think the men would like a mess of trout for supper?" Bob asked.

"Fine. Think you can get some?"

"I'm pretty sure of it. There's a little brook a short piece back and unless I'm greatly mistaken there's trout in it."

"All right, Go to it only don't get lost. I guess though that's a fool thing to say to you," the Captain added with a laugh.

Bob was gone about an hour and when he returned he had twenty fine brook trout averaging about a half a pound.

"Bully for you, son," cried one of the men. "Those will go fine for supper."

After supper they sat around and told stories until the Captain declared that it was time for taps. They had decided that it would be useless to keep a watch after dark.

"That machine won't come in the night even if the others do," the Captain had said and all agreed with him.

For two long days they took turns of two hours watching at the peep hole between the two rocks and nothing had happened.

"This sure is getting monotonous," the Captain complained to Bob as he relieved him about four o'clock in the afternoon of the third day. If they don't come to-day or to-morrow I'm afraid the men will begin to get uneasy and want to give it up for a bad job, and I can't say as I'd blame them much. It sure is beginning to get on my nerves."

Two or three times each day Bob had called Jack on the pocket phone and they had enjoyed long talks together. The phones were working perfectly and Captain Brice told Jack that he considered it one of the most wonderful inventions he had ever seen.

"I guess you aren't the only ones who are getting tired of this waiting game," Jack said when Bob told him what Captain Jim had said a few minutes earlier. "Mebby you think it's fun waiting around this old farm with nothing to do from morning till night except eat."

"Well, you have always seemed to enjoy that all right," Bob laughed. "How are they feeding you there?"

"Wonderful. Best eats I ever had," Jack replied. "But I do wish they would come."

"And you aren't the only one who wishes it," Bob laughed as he bade him good-bye.

The following day, some time during the afternoon, Bob, who had been on watch since two o'clock and it was nearly time for him to be relieved, peeped out through the bush, he saw a thin whisp of smoke coming from the chimney of the cabin.

"That's funny," he thought. "I didn't hear anybody come up the trail. Wonder if I've been asleep and didn't know it."

A moment's thought, however, convinced him that it was not at all likely, for he had not been at all sleepy.

"They must have come in from the other side," he concluded as he kept his eyes fixed on the cabin.

In a few minutes he saw the door open and the man whom he knew as Big Tiny stepped out, followed by Pierre. For some moments the two men stood at the door talking earnestly together. Bob noticed that not once did they look upward.

"Evidently they're not expecting the flyer to-day," he thought.

He watched until the men went back into the house and then hastened to report to the Captain.

"Good," the Captain declared and all the men were greatly pleased to know that there was the prospect of speedy action.

"How many of them are there?"

"I only saw two but I imagine the rest of them are not far off."

"Now I suppose that airship will show up before long."

"Probably but I hardly think he will come today," and Bob explained his reason for thinking as he did. "When you see them come out of the cabin and look all around every few minutes you can know that they're expecting him."

"Well, I don't think there will be any need of keeping a watch all the time now," the Captain said. "You see there's nothing we can do till he comes and in this clear air I imagine we can hear him about as soon as we could see him."

"But don't you think there might be a chance of learning something by keeping watch?" Bob asked and then, realizing that the Captain might think he was criticising his action, he apologized.

"I didn't mean to interfere," he said.

"Interfere nothing, you know I'm always glad of a suggestion from you and this time I think you are right and I wrong. We ought not to overlook a single chance that might help."

But, although he kept a man on watch until dark, nothing happened except that they learned that there were five men in the cabin.

"My, what a man that big fellow is," Captain Jim said to Bob as he returned shortly before supper time from standing his watch. "What did you say his name is?"

"I don't know his right name but they call him Big Tiny."

"Big Tiny. What a contradiction of terms. But it's just like some of these fellows up in this part of the world to give him a name like that."

"Yes, a very fat man is pretty sure to be called 'slim' and a slim man 'fatty'," Bob agreed.

"I'd sure hate to run up against him in a rough and tumble. I'll bet he could more than hold his own with three ordinary men," and the Captain shook his head as he turned away.

"And, believe me, that fellow Pierre is no slouch," Bob declared.

Before supper Bob called Jack and told him that the men arrived and that he might expect word to start most any time the following day.

"Are all five of them there?" Jack asked.

"Yes, there're all here."

"Good, we'll nab the whole bunch."

"Here's hoping."

As soon as it was too dark for the man on duty to see the cabin he returned and reported all quiet.

"We'll all turn in early to-night because we must be up as soon as it is light. He's apt to come any time and we don't want to miss a trick," the Captain ordered, and the men all readily agreed that it was the best plan.

"I'd like to creep up close to that cabin and see if I can hear what they are saying," Bob said to the Captain a few minutes later. "I might find out something that would help."

"And then again you might get caught. No, you've taken all the risk you're going to on this job," and the Captain shook his head.

"But, Captain——"

"No buts about it," Captain Jim smiled. "I know you are not afraid but I am and anyhow I don't think the chances of you learning anything are worth the risk. You see if they should spot you even if you got away it would put them on their guard and spill the beans so far as our catching them is concerned. They probably have some way of warning that fellow if the coast is not clear and we'd have our trouble for nothing. You understand we haven't really got a thing on them yet."

"But we saw——"

"Yes, I know you saw them load something into that plane but you couldn't go into court and swear that it was whiskey, could you?"

"I suppose not," Bob said slowly. "But——"

"Oh, of course there's not a bit of doubt as to what it was, but when it comes to evidence, well, you've got to get 'em with the goods on them, that's all."

"Of course you're right, I only thought——"

"You thought you could do something more. I know but believe me you and that brother of yours have done enough on this job."

"All right, I'll give it up."

"Talking about evidence," the Captain began, "I remember a case only last fall at the Bangor fair. I saw a fellow hand another a flask about half full of what looked like whiskey. The man drained it and passed the empty flask back together with a bill.

Then I stepped up and arrested the two of them. The fellow who had sold the whiskey was a bit too quick for me and before I could stop him he threw the bottle over a fence near by. Oh, yes, I got the pieces later and they smelled of whiskey but do you think that did any good? Not so you'd notice it. When they were brought into court they both swore that the bottle had contained nothing but cold tea and of course I couldn't swear that it didn't. So the judge had to let them go."

"But the bits of the flask that you picked up, didn't——"

"No, they didn't," the Captain laughed. "You see I couldn't identify them as pieces of the same flask which I had seen him hand over so it was no good. No, evidence is evidence and of course rightly so or a good many innocent people would suffer."

"I guess you're right about that."

"And that's why I want to get that flyer on American soil with the goods actually in his possession."

It was a long time before Bob got to sleep that night. As he told Jack afterwards he just itched to creep up to the cabin and hear what they were talking about. If he could only learn where they were to send the stuff it would make it so much easier. But he was a good soldier and his commanding officer had ordered not to do it so that settled it.

"I believe he's making a mistake though," he thought as he finally drifted off to sleep.

Breakfast was over the next morning almost before the sun was fairly up and then there was nothing to do but wait.

But this time the waiting was of short duration for shortly before eight o'clock Bob's quick ears caught the sound of the motor.

"Listen," he said to the Captain who was sitting beside him.

"I don't hear a thing."

"You will in a minute."

"Now I hear it," the Captain declared a few moments later.

Bob immediately called Jack and told him that the plane was coming.

"Good." Jack's voice was full of eagerness. "I'll tell Captain Brice. He just went out to the plane to get it warmed up and we'll be all ready when you give the word."

"Good. You'll probably get it in about an hour unless he stops for his breakfast."

The humming of the motor was plainly audible now and all the men were showing their eagerness.

"Let's you and I get up to the peep hole," the Captain proposed. "The rest of you stay here and be ready for instant action," he ordered.

"They're sending up the smoke signal so I guess they don't suspect anything," Bob announced a few minutes later as he peeped out.

"Good."

"Now we'd better get down in the bushes until he lands," Bob cautioned. He comes down right over us and he might see us."

They had hardly concealed themselves when he swooped down barely missing the two rocks.

"Are you sure that they'll come this way after he gets off?"

"They did the other time but of course that don't make it sure that they will this time," Bob replied. "They must have come from the other direction yesterday and they may go away the same way."

"Then I think we'd better get back as quickly as we can and all make a detour round to the other end of the field where we can get pretty close to the cabin so as to be sure to nab them after he leaves."

"Aren't you afraid we'll miss seeing them load?"

"We might but from the fact that they haven't started yet I fancy they are going to eat breakfast before they get to work and I think we'll have time."

They hastened back with all possible speed and the Captain explained the situation to his men and, with no other delay they set out. The traveling was not bad and they arrived at the other end of the field just as the door of the cabin opened and the man

came out. That end of the field was fringed with a heavy growth of bushes and, by lying flat on their stomachs they were able to crawl up until they had a fair view of the smugglers not more than thirty feet away.

"That's Hi Stone all right," one of the men whispered to the Captain.

"Mebby he is now but he wasn't the last time I saw him about two years ago," the Captain whispered back.

Bob, who was lying close to the other side of Captain Jim, heard the words and from his tone and manner he was sure that he was greatly excited. But he asked no question knowing that it was best to talk as little as possible.

The loading of the big plane was accomplished in a short time and, after shaking hands with the little man, the aviator gave his propeller a whirl and in another moment he was off.

The five smugglers watched him while he circled the field a couple of times mounting higher and higher. Then, as he disappeared in a bank of clouds they turned back toward the cabin.

At that moment Captain Jim spoke.

"We've got every one of you covered. Throw up your hands and the first man who moves will get shot."

As his voice rang out the five men turned quickly and as they saw the rifle barrels peeping out from the bushes every man's hands shot above his head.

"That's right. Keep them there," the Captain ordered as he stepped out into the open. "Now quick, Bob, get the word to Jack."

Bob did so and was assured by Jack that they were all ready to start. Then he followed the others out into the open.

"Well, well, it's some time since we met, Slippery Elm."

The Captain stood in front of the little man while the other officers remained a few feet distant each one with rifle covering one of the prisoners.

"You have the advantage of me, sir," the little man began with a great show of dignity.

"Now isn't that too bad that you should have forgotten me so soon. And to think that it has hardly been two years since we last met."

"I tell you you've got the wrong man. My name is Hiram Stone and I am a farmer. I live just this side of the Forks as I can easily prove."

"That may be all right except for the name," the Captain said then turning to his men, "Gentlemen, let me introduce to you Slippery Elm, alias Dodging Jim, alias Jimmie the Weasel, and goodness knows

how many others. He is the most notorious smuggler in two continents and is wanted by at least three governments."

"I tell you you've got me wrong," the little man insisted.

"Well, we won't argue the point now. I guess smuggling liquor over the border will be enough to hold you for a time at least."

"But you're an American officer and have no authority to arrest us on Canadian soil."

"Oui, dat right," the man known as Tiny joined in.

"Another point we won't stop to discuss now," the Captain said. "We've got some pretty stiff arguments in the shape of these guns and we'll thrash out the ethics of the case later when we have more time. You men keep them covered while I put the bracelets on them and don't hesitate to shoot if there's any occasion."

CHAPTER XIV.

JACK TAKES TO THE AIR.

CAPTAIN BRICE and Jack were in the air in less than five minutes after they had received the word from Bob.

The Captain had long before explained his plan to the boy.

"Jim and I reckoned that he'll likely make about seventy-five or eighty miles an hour, and will probably go towards Boston. That will bring him somewhere over Augusta at the end of the first hour. So I'm planning to be in that vicinity at about that time and we ought to pick him up. Of course it's largely guesswork and if he goes off in another direction we'll be out of luck, that's all."

As the big plane left the ground Jack experienced a thrill such as he had never had before. He had often dreamed of chasing an enemy plane through the air but had never dared hope that he might actually take part in such a flight. The Captain had pro-

vided him with a powerful field glass and he knew that his part in the game was to catch sight of the other machine.

He began using the glasses almost as soon as they started.

"It won't do any harm and he may be coming more in this direction than we think," he told himself.

But for nearly an hour he saw nothing more closely resembling an airship than a distant hawk.

"Keep an eye peeled," Captain Brice shouted back. "We're apt to pick him up most any time now."

The words had hardly left the Captain's lips when Jack saw through the glass a speck which sent a thrill of excitement through his body. Was it the plane or only another bird? It was higher than they and too far off for him to be sure. He waited a few minutes and then handed the glass to the Captain pointing toward the speck as he did so.

Captain Brice looked through the glass for several minutes then he handed it back with a nod of his head. Immediately after he changed the direction of their flight slightly and, as Jack again got the focus, he realized that the chase had begun in good earnest. Yes, there was no longer any doubt as to the identity of the distant object. It was a plane and he did not hesitate in feeling sure that it was the one they were after.

Faster and faster the plane pushed its way through the air and nearer and nearer they drew to their quarry.

So far as Jack could see the distant aviator never swerved from his course which was south-westerly.

"I'll bet he's planning to hit either Boston or New York," he thought.

It was soon evident that they were rapidly overhauling the other flyer and before long Jack could easily make out the form of the driver with the aid of the glass. Just then Captain Brice turned in his seat.

"I'm going to slow her down a bit," he shouted.

As he spoke Jack keeping his eyes on the plane ahead now not more than an eighth of a mile away, saw the man turn his head.

"He's seen us," he shouted.

The fact was at once evident for, as their machine slowed up the other began to draw away. Seeing this Captain Brice at once increased his speed but to his amazement he was no longer able to decrease the distance between the two planes.

"He's got some speed there," he shouted back as he gave his plane the last notch.

And now Jack saw that the machine ahead was changing its course. In a large arc he swung until in the course of fifteen or twenty minutes he was heading back nearly due north.

"He's going to try and get back over the border," Captain Brice shouted turning his head.

For a moment Jack looked downward. They were about three thousand feet high and below he could see the tumbling waters of the ocean. He was unable to repress a shudder as the thought of what would happen should anything go wrong with the plane came to him.

"Guess it would be no worse than dropping on the land though," he thought as he looked ahead once more.

As he kept his eyes on the plane ahead it was soon evident to the boy that they were doing little if any better than holding their own.

Captain Brice again turned his head.

"It's might queer," he shouted. "I thought I had the fastest flyer in the country but that fellow's got one just as fast and I'm not sure but what he can beat us."

Glancing down again Jack saw that they were once more over the land. So far as he could judge their relative position did not change a particle during the next hour.

"We must be nearly up to Canada," he thought.

For some time the smuggler had been increasing his altitude and now as Jack glanced down he was hardly able to see the earth.

"I think we're gaining a bit," Captain Brice shouted.

He had hardly spoken the words when a sound like the bursting of a bomb came to Jack's ears above the throbbing of the motor. Almost at the same instant a sheet of flame seemed to leap from the plane now only a short distance ahead. Jack stared as one fascinated at the sight. For a moment the plane seemed to poise like a wounded bird and then it began to fall.

Over and over the stricken plane turned as it hurtled toward the earth.

At the sound of the explosion Captain Brice had turned off the gas and as Jack, leaning far over, watched the falling plane, he was making as short a turn as possible.

"Poor fellow. That's the end of him," he said in a low tone easily audible now that the motor was still.

The blazing plane at the moment disappeared in a dense piece of woods.

Captain Brice continued to let his plane drift until they were within a few hundred feet of the earth when he started the engine again.

"Look out for a good place to land," he shouted.

But it was some little time before they were able to pick out a suitable landing field, but finally Jack saw a large level spot and pointed it out to the Captain.

"All right we'll go down."

And down they went landing a few minutes later. The big plane sped along the ground and at last came to a stop not thirty feet from a big farm house.

"I don't know whether we can call this a success or not," the Captain said as he climbed out of the machine.

"Well, one thing is certain," Jack returned. "Whoever was to get that load of whiskey will have to go without it."

"No doubt of that."

Just then the front door of the house opened and a man closely followed by a woman came out.

"Good day, sir," the Captain said snatching off his goggles and cap.

"'Tis that all right," the man replied with a smile. "Ye been out taking a spin I reckon."

"You might call it that," the Captain answered. "But can you tell us where we are?"

"Reckon I ought to seeing as how I've lived here all my life. Ye're about two miles north of the town of Jackman, Maine."

"Thanks."

"Twon't cost yer a cent," the farmer grinned. "But I'd sure like ter know where yer're from."

"If you'll excuse us just a moment while we telephone we'll be glad to tell you all about ourselves."

"Pshaw, now, that's too bad but we hain't got no telephone."

"We've got our own with us but thanks just the same," the Captain said, then turning to Jack:

"Better call your brother and let them know that our chase has ended."

It took Jack several minutes to raise Bob, but finally he heard his voice.

"Did you get him?"

"Not exactly but in a way we did," and he told about the chase and its tragic ending.

"Where are you now?"

"Two miles north of Jackman."

"Good. You had better wait there for us. We'll be out sometime late to-morrow afternoon I hope."

"How did you come out?"

"Fine. We got them all without any trouble."

While this conversation was going on the farmer and his wife stood with open mouths watching.

"What do yer call that thing?" he asked after Jack had said good-bye.

"It's a pocket radiophone."

"Don't use no wires, eh."

"No, the waves are carried through the ether."

"I want ter know. I've heered tell on 'em but never tuk much stock in 'em before now. But I reckon as how ye was really talkin' ter somebody."

"I was talking to my brother."

"An' where might he be?"

"He is somewhere to the west of here, about thirty miles away I should judge."

"Do tell. Mandy did ye ever hear the beat of that?"

But his wife seemed speechless with wonder and unable to make him any reply.

Then the Captain told them about their chase after the smuggler.

"Where did you say that feller fell?" he asked as soon as Captain Brice had finished.

"It must have been nearly twenty miles from here," Jack told him. "I noticed that there was a small pond just a little way from where he landed and he went down in a narrow gorge between two hills."

"That must be over by the twins," the farmer said. "That's what we call them two hills, they're so much alike."

"How far is it from here?" Captain Brice asked.

"Matter of fifteen miles I reckon."

"I wonder if we could buy our dinner here?" the Captain asked.

"No, sir, ye can't, but I reckon me and Mandy 'd be mighty glad ter give yer all yer want ter eat fer nothin'."

"Now that's mighty good of you," the Captain began but the old farmer cut him short.

"Dinner'll be on the table in about half an hour I reckon."

It was a plain but good substantial dinner to which they sat down a little later, and Mrs. Smith flushed with pleasure as they praised the cooking which indeed deserved it.

"Do you suppose we could get a car to drive us over to that place?" the Captain asked as they finally pushed back their chairs. "We ought to see what became of that fellow."

"Well, now, I got a flivver out in the barn and I can run you over just as well as not."

"That'll be fine if you will let me pay you for it."

"Reckon we'll talk about that when we get back. It won't break ye."

It was nearly three o'clock when they arrived at the point designated as the twins.

"He came down right here as near as I could judge," Jack declared as he jumped out of the car.

"You may be right and I hope you are," Captain Brice declared. "But at the rate we were going you could easily be several miles out of the way. Anyhow we'll make a search and we may find what's left of him."

"There's some smoke right over there." Jack pointed to his right.

"That may be it," Captain Brice said as they started off through the woods.

It was a little over a mile to the place where the smoke was rising, and soon they were at the spot. It was, as they had surmised, the airplane, but now it was only a mass of twisted and scorched metal. The blazing plane had set fire to some underbrush but fortunately it was not dry enough to do more than smoulder. They quickly beat out all that remained of the fire and then turned their attention to the plane.

"She's sure one wreck," Captain Brice said as he surveyed it. "I wonder what has become of the man."

Just then Jack, who was standing on the opposite side saw a foot sticking out from beneath one of the twisted wings.

"Here he is," he called.

Captain Brice and the farmer quickly came around to that side and the two held up the wing while Jack pulled the man out.

"He's dead, of course," the Captain said as he placed his hand over his heart.

Several of the cases of whiskey had been broken open by the fall but a number remained unharmed.

"Care to keep one or two of them as souvenir," the Captain asked the farmer.

"Wouldn't have the pesky stuff round the house. I hain't got no use fer it."

"Nor I," and the Captain dragged the jugs from the machine and smashed them with a rock.

Fortunately the dead man was light and between them they managed to carry him out to the car. They then drove into Jackman and left him with the local undertaker explaining the circumstances. On their return the farmer refused to accept a cent of pay.

"I'm glad enough ter git them fellers out of the way. They're sure a bad lot," he declared.

When they proposed going to the hotel in town for the night both the farmer and his wife insisted on their staying with them.

"I reckon we can make yer comfortable," he declared and seeing that he really wanted them to stay they gladly consented.

"How would you like to take a little ride in my flivver?" the Captain asked after they had eaten supper.

"Now that's mighty good o' you," the farmer replied. "But I reckon not. I don't care how far up I git jest so one fut stays on the ground, but I hain't ready ter become an angel not jest yet," and they all, including Mrs. Smith, laughed.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED. CONCLUSION.

As soon as Captain Jim had the five men securely handcuffed he left them in charge of two of his men while the others made a search of the cabin. It was nearly empty, the only furnishings being a few chairs and a number of bunks built against the sides.

"Guess they must have taken it all on that trip," Captain Jim said as he glanced about the room.

But as he spoke one of the men was lifting up a trap door in one of the back corners of the room. A ladder led to a cellar below and there they found a large quantity of whiskey and other liquors.

"I'm not quite sure whether I have a legal right to spill this stuff but I'm going to take a chance on it," Captain Jim told Bob.

He sent one of the men up to look for an ax and in a short time the cellar was nearly flooded with the costly fluids.

"There, that stuff will never make anyone drunk, that's sure," he said as he stove in the head of the last barrel.

Bob was impressed by the fact that not one of Captain Jim's men even suggested drinking any of the liquor.

"You'll pay and pay well for that stuff," the man, known to the Captain as Slippery Elm, told them as they once more joined the others outside. "This is Canada and you have no jurisdiction on this side of the line."

"I hope not," Captain Jim replied. "I'm far from being a rich man and it would bankrupt me to pay half of what that stuff would cost."

Pierre and Big Tiny glared at Bob in a way that made him shudder in spite of himself and the little man said to him in a low tone:

"Some day we may square accounts."

"All right now, let's get going," Captain Jim ordered. "We'll go back to camp and pack up and then hit the trail for Jackman. No we won't either. On second thought I think we had better take these birds straight to Bangor."

"Now I want you fellows to pay strict attention to what I'm going to say. I hate a man who'll sell whiskey worse than poison and have more respect for a snake so you can easily figure out about what I think of you. Now I'm going to take you to Bangor either alive or dead and it doesn't make a whole lot of difference to me which. Now I reckon you understand what I mean."

They had disarmed the men before leaving them to search the cabin and now, with them handcuffed Bob felt that there could be no trouble.

The prisoners made no reply to the Captain's statement but it was evident to Bob that they thoroughly understood what he meant.

As soon as they got back to the place where they had camped they prepared a hasty lunch and by one o'clock were ready for the start.

"Can't you take these things off?" the little man asked holding out his hands. "It's mighty hard work going through the woods without the use of your hands. We won't start anything."

"Not much," the Captain replied. "You ought to have thought of the inconveniences of this business before you took it up. Smuggling diamonds is I fancy much safer and it's a pity that you didn't stick to it. No, I'm not going to take one little bit of a chance. I imagine you can get through all right without your hands if you are careful. Anyhow you've got to. That's all."

The man scowled and turned away muttering something which Bob failed to catch.

To travel through the thick forest without the use of one's hands to protect the face from the twigs and branches is indeed a hardship and Bob could not help a feeling of pity for the prisoners. But he knew that the Captain was doing exactly right in refusing

to free their hands. They were men of the most desperate character and, knowing that a long term in prison at hard labor awaited them, they would be sure to take advantage of the first opportunity that offered the least chance of escape. As the Captain had said they must take their medicine.

But the Captain was by no means cruel and he set a slow pace in order to make it as easy for them as possible without taking a chance. That night they camped beside a brook and Bob caught a good mess of trout for supper much to the delight of all even including the prisoners.

The Captain divided his party into two watches of three men each. The first to watch until twelve o'clock and the second the rest of the night.

"There, when I was talking with Jack I forgot all about telling him that we were going straight to Bangor," Bob said as he and the Captain were talking together after supper. "Guess I'd better call him up and tell him."

He caught Jack just as he was getting into bed and they chatted for some time.

"Then we'll meet you at the hotel in Bangor some time to-morrow night," Jack said.

"If we have good luck," Bob replied.

The night passed without incident and they got an early start the next morning. The prisoners seemed to have accepted their fate and made no complaints

although Bob knew that they were having a pretty hard time of as he could tell by the numerous scratches on their faces.

It was about ten o'clock when Bob, who at the time was leading the way and choosing the easiest route so as to give the manacled men as little pain as possible, suddenly stopped and held up his hand.

"What is it?" the Captain who was a few feet behind, asked.

"There's one of those cabins I was telling you about just ahead of us."

"Good enough. Now mebbe we'll be able to solve the mystery," and the Captain called a halt.

"Slippery, do you know anything about these log cabins which disappear on short notice?" the Captain asked.

The man shook his head in sullen silence. Captain Jim then turned to the other prisoners and asked the same question but they pretended to no knowledge of what he was asking.

"All right then, we'll have to find out for ourselves. Get your gun out, Bob, and the rest of you stay here."

The mysterious cabin stood in a small open space not more than a hundred feet from where they had stopped. With drawn revolvers the two approached it from the rear, after watching for some minutes to see if there were signs of it being occupied.

"I don't believe there's anyone there," the Captain said as he stepped out into the open.

"Doesn't look like it."

It was only a few steps from the edge of the clearing to the back of the cabin. Captain Jim was a few feet ahead of Bob, he having insisted on taking the lead. As he came close to the house he stopped a moment and listened, then he stepped forward and the next instant he burst into a loud laugh.

"Well, I'll be jiggered," he cried as Bob came up. "What do you know about that?"

And then the mystery of the vanishing cabin was cleared up.

"Why, it's nothing but cloth painted to imitate a log cabin," Bob declared as he reached out his hand and touched it.

"Sure it is, but whoever did it is an artist I'll tell the world. I never suspected a thing of the sort till I was almost near enough to touch it."

They quickly went around to the front and opened the door. As they stepped inside the whole thing became clear. The cloth, painted black on the inside so that no light would show through it, was stretched upon a very light jointed framework. There was no floor.

"Why, the whole thing could be taken down in ten minutes and almost be packed in a suitcase," the Captain declared as he looked about.

"But what do you suppose they used it for?" Bob asked. "You remember Jack saw it the first time up near Moosehead Lake."

"Now you're asking something."

"Haven't you any idea?"

"Nary a one."

"And I don't suppose it will do any good to ask those men."

"Not a bit. They can keep a secret all right when they want to."

"Well, I'm a Yankee and can make a guess although it probably is pretty far fetched," Bob said.

"Let's hear it. Your guesses have been pretty good so far this trip."

"Well, I figure it something like this. You know most of the half-breeds up here and the French too for that matter are very superstitious. They are full of stories of ghosts and haunts and the like. Now isn't it possible that this thing was made and used in some way to work up a superstitious scare regarding them and so make it easier for them to operate?"

The Captain did not reply for a minute or two.

"I think you're right," he said finally. "It's a good guess at any rate, and for the life of me I can't think of a better. But let's get back and I'll see if I can get anything out of any of them."

"So you thought you'd work up a ghost scare with that canvas cabin, eh?" he asked the little man.

The latter made no reply, but Bob caught a glance which he gave Pierre and was more than ever convinced that he had made a good guess.

As soon as the other officers had examined the cabin the Captain ordered that it be taken down and packed up.

"We'll take it with us," he said, "It will make a good souvenir at least."

As he had told Bob it took but a few minutes to take the thing down even by those who were not used to it and when it was rolled up it made a surprisingly small package considering its size when set up.

They reached the place where they left the cars late that afternoon and shortly after nine o'clock they drew up before the station house in Bangor and turned the prisoners over to the Chief of Police.

"Be mighty careful of that fellow," the Captain cautioned, pointing to the little man. He's one of the most wanted men in the country and as slippery as an eel. Don't let him get away."

"We won't loose him," the policeman promised.

They found Captain Brice and Jack waiting for them at the hotel.

"Well, thanks to you boys, that job's done," Captain Jim declared as they were eating a late supper.

"But there's one thing that isn't done," Jack said. "I want to know how that cabin went up into thin

air and what's more I'm going to find out if it takes all summer."

"It won't take that long," Captain Jim laughed. "As a matter of fact it will only take about two minutes."

"Then you've solved it?"

"Bob has, or a part of it at least and I'm inclined to think the whole of it." And he proceeded to tell them all about it.

"What do you know about that?" Jack asked as soon as he had finished.

"Mighty clever I call it," Captain Brice declared.

"And to think that we never suspected it."

"Only a man with Slippery Elm's fertile brain would think up a thing like that," Captain Jim said as he pushed back his chair.

"Do you mean to say that you've caught Slippery Elm?" Captain Brice asked excitedly.

"Sure thing," Captain Jim replied.

"Some catch, I'll say," and Captain Brice held out his hand. "Congratulations."

It was while they were at breakfast the following morning that Captain Jim was called to the telephone. He was gone for about ten minutes and when he returned his beaming face told that he had heard good news.

"That was Slippery all right and the Chief tells me that there is a reward of ten thousand dollars for

him. "That'll be five thousand apiece for you boys."

"Not much it won't," Jack burst out. "You caught him."

"But I'd never have done it if you boys hadn't located him for me."

"Then we'll split the reward four ways," Bob proposed.

To this plan the two Captains objected declaring that the boys had earned the reward and it was not until both Bob and Jack absolutely refused to take a cent of it unless they would agreed to do as Bob had suggested that they gave in.

"But I don't feel right about it so far as I'm concerned," Captain Brice insisted. "I had nothing to do with his capture."

"No, all you did was to risk your life chasing that other fellow," Captain Jim said, and there they let the matter drop.

The next day Captain Brice and Captain Jim left in the former's plane for Washington.

"You boys may have to come down to Washington as witnesses against those fellows," Captain Jim told them as they shook hands, "But I hardly think it will be necessary."

"What men!" Bob declared as they drove the Captain's car back to the city.

"I'll tell the world," Jack agreed.

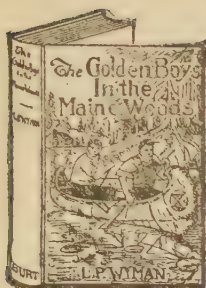
As soon as they had returned the car to the garage

the boys went back to the hotel and got their wheels. They made the run to Skowhegan in a little over two hours.

"Well, what next?" Mr. Golden asked after they had given a full account of their adventures.

"Who knows?" Bob laughed as he helped himself to his third piece of apple pie.

THE END.



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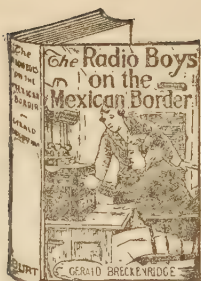
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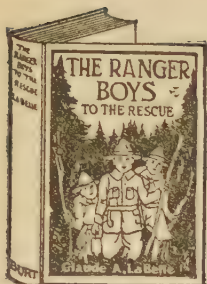
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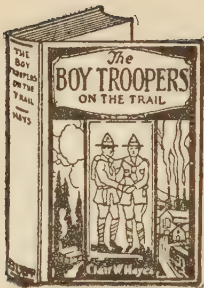
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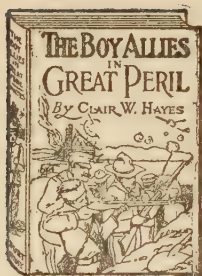
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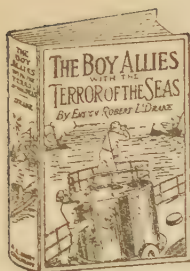
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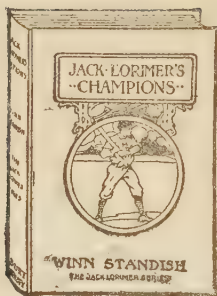
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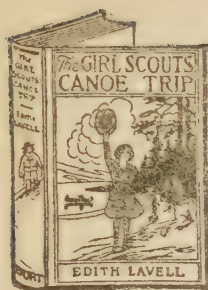
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